

May Day: a Hundred-year History



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INTRODUCTION

May Day is perhaps the most popular holiday marked internationally. Unlike other types of holidays, it transcends national borders and is celebrated practically all over the world. There are only a few countries left in which it is still illegal.

The first of May has been marked as a spring festival since ancient times. Back in the days of the Roman Empire, festivities were held in Rome in honour of the goddess Flora. They started on April 28 and lasted a few days. In the subsequent centuries other nations followed the Romans' example and celebrated May 1.

This tradition is still maintained in some parts of the world, although it was not until 100 years ago that May 1 became the holiday of workers' international solidarity, a worldwide festival of labour.

May Day originates from at least three events which took place a hundred years ago in the history of the workers' movement.

The first of these started with a major strike of American workers, in the course of which police opened fire on a demonstration in Chicago. It also includes the tragic events in Haymarket Square and the execution of innocent proletarian fighters, which caused a wave of protest all over the world.

The second event was the decision of the International Socialist Congress, which was convened in July 1889 in Paris, to hold international demonstrations of working people in all countries and cities on May 1 of the next year. The demands were for an 8-hour working day and other measures agreed upon by the Congress.

The third event, of course, was the first international celebration of May Day in 1890. In many countries and cities the popular demonstrations were so successful that workers' organizations decided to mark the day every year with mass demonstrations.

At first, May Day was only celebrated in a few Western European countries and the United States. Russian workers brought a special revolutionary spirit to it. As the proletariat

grows in various parts of the world, May Day becomes an increasingly broad holiday.

The slogans carried by the working people at May Day demonstrations reflected national and regional issues, as well as the organizational level of the working class: the character of May Day celebrations has also been an indication of both the general state of the working class movement in the world and the international political situation, which, naturally, is of interest today.

* * *

This book gives a general panorama of the hundred years of May Day celebrations, showing the dynamic and universal nature of this proletarian holiday.

THE IDEA:

“Working Men of All Countries, Unite!”

According to statistics, today's working class constitutes one third of the world's economically active population, or 660 million people. Its material and spiritual potential is colossal. Yet today, decades after the days when the working class was still taking shape and did not stand out among the masses of working people who were creating material values and ensuring the society's progress by their daily labour, it would be useful to look back at the history of the workers' movement.

At the end of the eighteenth century the term “proletariat”, which in ancient Rome was used to refer to the poorest part of free citizens, was revived. Political economists began applying it to propertyless hired workers who sold their labour power. The development of capitalist manufactories and later industrial production caused the proletariat, which was joined by the impoverished landless peasants, artisans and petty tradesmen, to grow rapidly.

The industrial revolution was brought about by the invention of machines, which replaced manual labour. It started in England, and before too long that country became the “world's workshop”. By the mid-19th century the industrial revolution had spread to other countries of Western Europe and the United States. Capitalism grew and established itself in conditions of a fierce revolutionary struggle against the feudal system, whose privileged estates resisted the growth of the bourgeoisie. Relying on its increasing economic might, the latter began supporting social progress and called for the destruction of outdated ways. Under the flag of “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity”, the bourgeoisie managed to use the discontent of the oppressed urban and rural masses to establish its reign in the society and the state.

Capitalism did not reduce the exploitation of the working people, but gave it new forms while preserving many of the

old ones. The development of production, transport and other means of communication between people led to a growth of production efficiency. Accompanying this was a lengthening of the working day, an increase in the employment of women's and children's labour, which cost the employer less than men's, and a worsening of the working conditions.

At the same time, the fact that masses of working people were being united in work teams, controlled by the same discipline, helped overcome the isolation typical of small producers. The workers employed at factories developed a sense of solidarity and resistance to the owners. Even at the dawn of its existence, the industrial proletariat started forming associations in order to safeguard its right to decent working and living conditions. Professional associations, something like the medieval guilds, developed into unions, mutual assistance societies and syndicates. Later they became known as trade unions.

From spontaneous unconscious protest, which sometimes was expressed by breaking the machines, the workers gradually came to more organized forms of economic struggle, such as strikes. This struggle took a long time, during which its forms and content were developed. The isolated spontaneous actions of workers at different factories for shorter working hours, better working conditions and higher pay gradually developed into movements uniting whole professions and industrial branches, cities and countries. In addition to economic demands, political ones began playing an increasing role. They were addressed to the government as well as the factory owners.

The working people of England were the first to realize that they had common interests and that it was necessary to force the state to legalize their rights. Chartism became the first mass political movement. Its participants expressed their demands in the People's Charter. Chartists hoped that the introduction of universal suffrage for men would guarantee the workers a substantial number of seats in the parliament and thus the passing of laws in the interests of the working people, among them one stipulating a 10-hour working day. Despite the fact that the first Chartist petition had over one million signatures, the bourgeois parliament rejected it without discussion. The second petition was signed by more than three million people, but its fate was no different. The climax of the Chartist movement was a general strike in August 1842,

which was suppressed with the help of police and the regular army. When the new upsurge of the struggle began in 1847 the parliament passed a law on a 10-hour working day for teenagers and women, but nonetheless refused to accept the third petition. An attempted uprising in 1848 was unsuccessful. Chartism helped the British proletariat to realize itself as a class, and at the same time showed the bourgeoisie that it could resort to reforms as a way of preventing a revolution.

In the United States, where universal suffrage for men had been granted after the War of Independence in the late 18th century, although there were limitations, such as having to own a specified amount of property, it took decades of struggle and strikes to establish a 10-hour working day. It was introduced in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1835 as a result of a general strike and in other states, by the early 1860s.

In France, the workers of Paris took an active part in the French Revolution of the late 18th century and then in the revolution of 1830, which finally deposed the Bourbons. A year later the Lyon weavers rebelled against a 15-hour working day and starvation wages. They mounted a black banner on a barricade, which said: "To live working or die fighting!" Having succeeded in forcing the troops out of the city, the workers were at a loss as to how to proceed, and a week later were defeated by the regular army. The second Lyon uprising took place in 1834 and spread to Paris and other cities. The red banner was its symbol and "A Republic or death!" its slogan. It also ended in failure.

The Silesian weavers' uprising in 1844 in Prussia was both a spontaneous mutiny against hunger and also a manifestation of the workers' struggle against capitalist exploitation.

These actions organized by the workers of different countries, reflecting different levels of the social and political development of the proletariat as a class, proved that an independent working class movement had appeared in Western Europe and the United States. The proletariat's class consciousness was developing, as was its realization that its interests and those of the capitalists were radically opposed. Nevertheless, neither the utopian Communists in France, nor the communist doctrines of the secret societies of the German craftsmen, or the Chartist ideas in England could show the way to liberate the proletariat. The great Utopian Socialists, Henri Saint Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, exposed many of contradictions of capitalism and drew vivid

pictures of the ideal society which was supposed to replace it. Although feeling compassion for the miserable position of the working people and wishing to help them, they did not see them as a class capable of realizing its ideals.

In the 1840s capitalism was rapidly developing, building up and revolutionizing industry and transport, bringing new countries and whole continents into its orbit and creating prerequisites for the appearance of national states and the world market. In those conditions, it was up to intellectual giants to give a scholarly analysis of the capitalist system, to discover its inner contradictions and uncover the secret of capitalist profit. In addition to encyclopedic knowledge, it required boldness of thought, a desire to help the oppressed and belief in their liberation. It was Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, who, having studied philosophy, political economy and the position of the working class in the most industrialized countries of Europe, came up with scientific communism. The main idea of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which they published in 1848, was that by uniting the workers of all countries the way to a society free of exploitation could be opened to all humankind.

Having put forward a theory that was both revolutionary and critical, Marx and Engels continued developing it. At the same time, they realized that the working class of Western Europe and America of that time was not ready to carry out its historical mission even if it accepted their theory. An appropriate organization was needed for that. "It was our duty," Engels wrote, "to provide a scientific foundation for our view, but it was equally important for us to win over the European and in the first place the German proletariat to our conviction."*

The League of the Just formed by the German emigrant workers was transformed into the Communist League, whose strident slogan "Working men of all countries, unite!" replaced the vague slogan "All men are brothers!" The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* became the programme of the Communist League. The League was a good school of revolutionary activity, a model of a proletarian party having an international membership and connected with the English Chartists, and French, Belgian and North American workers. Thus the union between Marxism and the working class movement began.

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 179.

Having contributed to the revolutionary upsurge, the Communist League ceased to exist in 1852, although its ideas were winning new supporters all over the world.

During the new revolutionary upsurge in the beginning of the 1860s, Karl Marx was in London writing *Capital* and Frederick Engels was in Manchester. They welcomed the growing scale of the strike struggle. The big strikes of London construction workers, who were demanding a 9-hour working day, were given moral and financial support by the workers of Germany, France and the United States.

The Civil War, which began in the United States in 1861, aggravated class antagonisms in England, for whereas the British government was preparing to intervene on the side of the rebellious southern slave owners, the workers' sympathies were with the North. The revolutionary beginning of the war, the law granting land to the poor and abolishing slavery, increased the prestige of President Abraham Lincoln. The federal army had people of different nationalities fighting in it, among them emigre revolutionaries from Europe. Demonstrations of workers held all over England in the spring of 1863 forced the government to give up its plans of intervening. Karl Marx supported these internationalist sentiments and the initiative of the British proletariat, seeing in it in the first place its growing desire to overcome national isolation and unite the workers' organizations of different countries.

Contacts between French and English workers were established at the World Exhibition held in London in 1862. The uprising in Poland that took place the next year caused a wave of solidarity among them. Following a meeting in London's St. James' Hall, the Anglo-French Committee started preparations for the establishment of a united international organization which would include, among other members, the London Educational Communist Society of German Workers, which for years had been propagating the ideas of scientific socialism.

The founding meeting of the International Working Men's Association was held on September 28, 1864 in London's St. Martin's Hall. Besides English workers, it was attended by the representatives of workers from England, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, Hungary and Denmark. Karl Marx gladly accepted the offer to write its general rules and an inaugural address. The Inaugural Address of the Working Men's Association mentioned the growing poverty

among the English workers and also an achievement that had been a major victory—legislation on a 10-hour working day—and stressed that the emancipation of the working class required close cooperation between the working men of all countries.

The Inaugural Address went on to say that the heroic resistance of the English working class had disrupted the plan for a shameful crusade to perpetuate slavery and spread it further on the other side of the Atlantic. The European government's approval of tsarist Russia's suppression of the Polish uprising "taught the working classes the duty to master themselves the mysteries of international politics, to watch the diplomatic acts of their respective Governments; to counter-act them, if necessary, by all means in their power..." Like the *Communist Manifesto* 16 years before, the Inaugural Address ended with the call "Working men of all countries, unite!"*

The General Rules emphasized that the emancipation of the working classes had to be accomplished by the working classes themselves and that the emancipation of labour was neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries, primarily the most advanced ones. Karl Marx tried to express his ideas in a form that would be understandable to the members of the working class movement at that time. For example, at the request of the General Council of the Society he included a statement in the General Rules stipulating that the International Working Men's Association and "all societies and individuals adhering to it will acknowledge truth, justice, and morality, as the basis of their conduct towards each other and towards all men, without regard to colour, creed, or nationality..." It was also stated there that it was one's civic duty to demand human and civil rights not only for oneself but for every citizen who performed his duties, and that the society "acknowledges no rights without duties, no duties without rights..."**

The First International, which subsequently became the name of the International Working Men's Association, played an important role in the history of the revolutionary struggle for the liberation of the working people. It contributed to the proliferation of the ideas of Marxism and initiated the mass movement of solidarity with the Paris Commune (1871), the

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 18.

** *Ibid.*, p. 20.

first workers' government, which lasted only 72 days... The First International created a basis for establishing independent political parties of the working class in each country, a necessary condition for the further development of the workers' movement.

Marx and Engels considered a democratic republic with universal suffrage the most favourable arena for the struggle of the working class and the improvement of its living and working conditions. However, the weakness of the workers' organizations did not allow them to achieve any substantial gains either in the United States or in France. The introduction of universal suffrage in 1871 in Germany opened favourable prospects for the revolutionary movement. Marx and Engels pointed out that by delegating their representatives to the parliament, the German workers had outpaced the English and French proletariat. Engels believed that universal suffrage helped broaden the ties of the party of the working class with the broad masses, and thus had to be fought for in all countries.*

However, Marx and Engels continued to consider the limitation of the working day the most important task. They were convinced that it was "a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvement and emancipation must prove abortive..."** The legal limitation of the working day, according to Marx, "is needed to restore the health and physical energies of the working class, that is, the great body of every nation, as well as to secure them the possibility of intellectual development, friendly communication, social and political action."***

The workers' campaign for shortening the excessively long working day was held with varying degrees of success in different countries. The workers of Australia were the first ones to start the struggle for an 8-hour working day. In 1856 League for an 8-hour Working Day in Melbourne made the decision to fight for it by a one-day strike. An 8-hour working day was introduced in a number of industrial branches there by the 1870s.

* See Marx and Engels. *Selected Works*, Vol. 21, Moscow, p. 173 (in Russian).

** Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 2, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 79.

*** *Ibid.*

On Karl Marx's proposal the Geneva Congress of the International held in September 1866 made the demand for the 8-hour working day the common platform of the working class throughout the world. "The legal limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which any further social improvements are impossible..." the resolution, which had been adopted unanimously, stated.

Thus the idea of the international solidarity of workers was given concrete content.

THE PROLOGUE:

The Chicago Tragedy of 1886

The 1880s in the United States were marked by the rapid development of industry and transport, the concentration of production and capital and the fast growth of cities. In one decade, the number of workers more than doubled, while their situation grew worse. Mechanization allowed entrepreneurs to use more women, teenagers and numerous immigrants as menial labourers. The living and working conditions were appalling, with most people crowded in slums. The legislation that had been introduced in some states stipulating an 8-hour working day was not being enforced. Life expectancy among the American workers was just 30 years. The issue of limiting the working day had literally become a matter of life and death.

The United States became the arena of a fierce class struggle unheard of in other countries. The "long strike" staged in 1875 at Pennsylvania coal mines was dispersed by the police and armed mercenaries hired by the coal company. The leaders of the strike were executed. The national strike of railway workers in 1877 cost 50 workers their lives. Many strikes staged by unqualified workers, as well as demonstrations and boycotts ended in clashes with the police. The struggle for the 8-hour working day started to assume a mass scale. It was supported by an organization called The Noble Order of the Knights of Labour, which first appeared as a secret organization with an elaborate ritual, but later became open to all, including women, blacks and immigrants.

In 1884 the congress of trade unions (which two years later was named the American Federation of Labour), an association uniting mainly qualified workers, also decided to support the struggle for an 8-hour working day. A general strike towards this end was scheduled for May 1, 1886. Why this particular date was chosen is not known. In some states the first of May was considered "moving day", when leases were signed and landlords could evict tenants.

As the date drew nearer, the workers' movement in the

United States was picking up intensity. Despite the fact that The Noble Order of the Knights of Labour was not directly involved in the campaign, the membership of its active branches grew sharply, with 600,000 new members joining. Trade-union membership almost doubled as well. Strikes became more frequent starting in 1886, leading to a shortening of the working day to 9-10 or even 8 hours.

On Saturday, May 1, 340 to 350 thousand workers in such major industrial centres as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Louisville and Baltimore went on strike.

The events took the most dramatic turn in Chicago, a major railway junction and industrial centre, with a population of close to one million. On May 1 two thirds of the local enterprises were shut down, shops were closed and railway communication stopped. A demonstration of 40,000 people was held on Michigan Avenue and some 25,000 people gathered in the park at a rally.

The first speaker at the meeting was journalist Albert Parsons. Born in Alabama, he was a member of the Noble Order of the Knights of Labour and Chairman of Chicago's Trade Union Assembly. In 1879 he had been nominated by the Socialist Labour Party as the workers' presidential candidate, but could not run because of the age qualification (Parsons was then younger than 35). The capitalist press called Parsons the leader of the American Commune. August Spies, a German immigrant, was a close colleague of Albert Parsons. He was the editor of the newspaper *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and a member of the Socialist Labour Party.

The rally was also addressed by Samuel Fielden, who had moved to the United States from England, and the German immigrant Michael Schwab. All of the speakers urged the workers to uphold their demands peacefully but actively and to seek the nationwide introduction and observance of an 8-hour working day. No calls were made for violence or anarchy.

However, a peaceful outcome did not suit the capitalists. Police were in full combat readiness and, on top of that, 1,500 soldiers were ready to be sent in to suppress the "public disorder" at any point. And if there were no public disorder, well, then it would have to be provoked.

On Monday, May 3, the workers of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company, who had been faced with a lock-out in retaliation for a strike they staged in February.

gathered for a rally in front of the company's gate. The owner summoned the police, who opened fire on the unarmed people, killing two and seriously injuring 50 others.

The leaders of the strike called a protest rally to be held in Haymarket Square in the evening of May 4. It was attended by as many as 3,000 workers. Chicago's Mayor Harrison observed the course of the rally. Addressing the rally Spies blamed McCormick for the murders that had been committed the day before and protested against the lock-out and rumours that the rally had been called to instigate further disorders. Albert Parsons joined the rally shortly after 9 p.m. with his wife and two children. In his speech he said that those who met moderate and just demands with sticks, gun shots and bombs would be forever disgraced. After finishing his speech he left the rally and went to a nearby café. When Samuel Fielden got up to speak it started raining and people gradually began to leave the square. So did the mayor.

Around 10 p.m. a big police detachment headed by Captain Bonfield, a man notorious in the city for his cruelty and brutality, entered the square. He ordered the people to disperse. Fielden had just begun to protest that the rally was peaceful when a bomb exploded where the police were standing. One policeman was killed and a few more were injured. Police opened fire on the workers, leaving some killed and some wounded lying on the street.

The events in Haymarket Square were used as a pretext for brutal repressions. Almost all activists of Chicago workers' movement were arrested, public organizations were outlawed and newspapers shut down. Eight people were charged with "conspiracy and murder". Although Fielden was the only leader who was in the square at the time of the explosion, August Spies and Michael Schwab were also arrested, as well as four others: the American Oscar Neebe; Adolph Fischer and George Engel, both German immigrants; and an Englishman named Louis Lingg. The police failed to arrest Albert Parsons, who had left Chicago. However, when the trial began on June 21 he came of his own accord and joined his comrades in the courtroom.

The trial lasted for more than two months. The witnesses had been prepared and the jury instructed to punish the anarchists. The police failed to find the provocateur who had thrown the bomb, if they had even looked for him at all. The procurator observed cynically that Parsons and his

comrades were no more to blame than the thousands of their followers, but that they had to be sentenced to teach the others a lesson.

The accused men were staunch and denied that they had been part of a conspiracy. Parsons stated that southern slave owners and the northern industrialists who sought to perpetuate the slavery of hired workers had been his enemies since his youth. Although the guilt of the accused was never proven, the court handed down a harsh verdict, sentencing 7 men to capital punishment and Oscar Neebe to 15 years in jail.

The brutal and unfair trial of the "Chicago martyrs" caused protest not only in the United States but also abroad. A protracted and fierce struggle began for the life of the sentenced men. Albert Parsons' wife travelled to 16 states with her two children speaking to hundreds of thousands of people and urging them to save the lives of seven innocent people, one of whom was her beloved husband. One wealthy young woman, who saw Spies at the trial, married him in the hope that this would help to save his life. The English writers Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, the French deputies, the workers' organizations of France, Holland, Russia, Italy and Spain, as well as some senators and public figures voiced their protest against the court's ruling.

But the Supreme Court refused to review the verdict. Only Fielden and Schwab had their sentences of capital punishment commuted to imprisonment for life. The youngest of the sentenced men, Louis Lingg, 22, was found dead in his prison cell. Parsons, Spies, Engel and Fischer went the whole tragic way.

Six years after the execution, in the summer of 1893, the new governor of Illinois, John Altgeld, pardoned three of the men who had been sentenced in the same case. He also admitted that both they and those who had been executed were innocent and that the unfair trial had been the result of political hysteria which had swept the country...

But even before the pardon, a monument was erected at the grave of the "Chicago martyrs" built with money collected by the workers. On its base are Spies' last words: "There will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today." Later this place became the burial place of the prominent activists of the American workers' movement, such as William Foster,

Elizabeth Flynn and Alexander Trachtenberg. It is also the site where some of the ashes of Joe Hill, who was shot on false charges in 1915, and William Haywood, who died in Moscow in 1928, were scattered. The rest of William Haywood's ashes are interred in the Kremlin wall facing Moscow's Red Square.

Every year on the eve of May Day red roses are placed at the monument to the accompaniment of *La Marseillaise*.

THE DECISION:

At the Paris Congress of United Socialists

The ruling circles of France decided to celebrate the centennial of the French Revolution with the opening in Paris of the World Industrial Exhibition. The Eiffel Tower was intended to serve as the symbol of technical progress. The French revolutionary workers came up with another idea: to open in Paris on the day of the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, July 14, an International Congress of Socialist Workers, a "world labour parliament".

The Congress opened on July 14, 1889, in Petrelle Hall, which was practically too small for it. It was attended by 400 delegates from 18 countries of Europe, and from the United States and Argentina, among them various colleagues of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels from the International Working Men's Association: August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht from Germany; Paul Lafargue, Edouard Vaillant and Victor Jaclard from France, who took part in the Paris Commune; Leo Frankel from Hungary; Pablo Iglesias from Spain; Sezar De Paupe from Belgium; Pyotr Lavrov from Russia; and Maria Jankowska from Poland. The younger generation of Marxists who had already won recognition was also represented at the Congress, such as Jules Guesde, and Gabriel Deville from France, Clara Zetkin from Germany, Victor Adler from Austria, Eleonor Marx-Aveling and Edward Aveling from England, and Georgi Plekhanov from Russia. Although Engels was not present at it, he attentively followed the work of the Congress. "It was a wonderful success...", he wrote to his friend, Friedrich Sorge, in the United States, "the whole of Europe was represented."*

Wilhelm Liebknecht, who was elected one of the organization's chairmen, stressed the continuity of the

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works*, Vol. 37, pp. 207-208 (in Russian).

Congress with the International Working Men's Association founded and headed by Karl Marx. The Congress mainly dealt with the issues of international labour and safety legislation. The resolution drafted for adoption by the Congress generalized the demands put forward in the course of the strike struggle by the workers in different countries.

The demand for an 8-hour working day, substantiated by Karl Marx and announced as the joint platform of the working class of the whole world by the First International 23 years before, was made the number-one issue at the Congress, for it was the only way to ensure a normal correlation between work and leisure and to give workers a chance to partake in social and cultural activities. The Congress also discussed banning child labour, limiting teenage labour, facilitating the work of women, regimenting night shifts and hazardous jobs, equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex or nationality, and the introduction of a weekly day-off. It stressed the demand that trade unions be granted the right to be active and to stage strikes.

Delegates from different countries spoke at the Congress about the position of the working class and the state of the workers' movement in their countries. The Congress received greetings from many workers' and socialist organizations. The delegates collected money in order to help the miners' strike in Westphalia and the families of French miners who had been killed in the accident at Saint-Etienne. The participants of the Congress pointed out that trade-union activity alone was not enough for the emancipation of the working class and urged the workers to join the socialist parties and struggle for political power.

The workers' movement was just as concerned with the problems of foreign policy and the prevention of aggressive wars as with the improvement of social conditions. A widespread opinion of that time was that disbanding all regular armies (which such countries as England, the United States, Switzerland, etc. did not then have) would help to curb militarism and prevent international conflicts, since it was believed that each country's independence and freedom could be protected by arming the people.

Towards the end of the Congress it was decided to hold a mass workers' demonstration in support of the decisions that had been passed. In a sense, the May Day demonstration and strike in Chicago in 1886 served as its prologue, for no one had forgotten the tragic aftermath of those events.

At the last meeting of the Congress on July 20, the head of the French trade unions, Raymond Lavigne, introduced a coordinated proposal on holding an international demonstration of workers on May 1, 1890.

The discussion was a short one. The anarchists claimed that the demonstration would be ineffective, if not accompanied by a general strike, which they said would start a social revolution. This adventurist connection between a demonstration, a strike and an uprising was energetically opposed by Wilhelm Liebknecht. He explained that a general strike required the sort of workers' organization which at that time simply did not exist in any country. When the workers have such a world organization, he said, they will undoubtedly find a better use for it by becoming the masters of the world rather than just limiting themselves to laying off work.

The decisions of the Congress envisaged that work would have to be stopped on the day of the demonstration, May 1, 1890, but said that the leaders of the workers' movement in each country should decide the most realistic form of this action.

It was not until later that the Paris Congress became known as the First Congress of the Second International. The decision to hold an international action on May 1, Engels called the best of those passed by the Congress.

THE BEGINNING:

May Day in the West in the 1890s

May Day demonstrations in 1890 were primarily attended by workers of those few countries which already had the experience of mass action.

The beginning of 1890 in Germany was marked by a parliamentary election campaign. The anti-democratic "emergency law" aimed against Socialists had been in operation for 11 years. It had led to the disbandment of 350 workers' organizations, the prohibition of hundreds of planned rallies and the constant persecution of the Social-Democratic press. The term of the law was nearing an end and whether it would be extended or not depended on the outcome of the election. The workers' party, which had accumulated a big revolutionary potential during the years of clandestine operation, was going all out to make the election a success. In an act of international solidarity, the workers of France, Holland and some other countries were holding fund-raising campaigns for the election fund of the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SDPG).

The Social-Democratic candidates won some 1,427,000 votes at the election, almost twice as many as three years before. Shortly after that Chancellor Bismark resigned after almost two decades of absolute power. However, the Social-Democratic faction in the Reichstag, the party's only legal body, was afraid that the reactionary forces would instigate provocations and so urged the working men and women of Germany to mark May Day with mass meetings and petitioning and to go on strike only if there was no danger of an open conflict. For their part the authorities were taking measures to oppose the strikes, while the capitalists of Hamburg, Leipzig and other cities set up special organizations which were threatening all strikers with a lock-out and black-listing. In Hamburg, Dresden and Magdeburg the workers' organizations called for strikes.

Having realistically assessed the situation and denounced the opposition, which was calling for a general strike, Engels

wrote in April: "We in Germany must hold May Day as quietly as possible. The army has been given a strict order to interfere immediately without waiting for a request from the civilian authorities, while the secret police is going out of its way... to provoke a clash."*

The celebration of May Day was held in a general and organized way. The workers in many industrial centres suspended work and held demonstrations and meetings outside the city. For the most part, clashes with the police were avoided. The lay-offs that followed caused new strikes, especially in the Hamburg port, where the struggle continued for a few more months, with other workers rendering material assistance and moral support. The Social-Democratic press pointed out that the German working class had celebrated May Day of 1890 in a dignified, peaceful way.

Strikes started already in April in different parts of Austria-Hungary. The newly-formed Social-Democratic Party of Austria-Hungary called for strikes and demonstrations to be held on May Day. The government decided to yield to the request of the workers' organizations and allow peaceful marches.

Frederick Engels pointed out that in Austria the proletarian holiday was marked "in a most brilliant and worthy fashion".

The parliamentary elections in France held in the autumn of 1889 were not successful for the Labour Party. This failure was a result of the new political situation connected with General Boulanger's attempt to establish a military dictatorship in the country. The lack of unity in the workers' movement had a negative effect on the organization of the May Day demonstration in Paris. The authorities banned all marches. Some 34,000 soldiers of the Paris garrison were in combat readiness; troops were summoned from Fontainebleau and Rambouillet and artillery from Versailles.

In spite of this, a festive spirit reigned in the French capital. Many enterprises stopped working and crowds of workers marched along the boulevards to the Place de la Concorde. The police could barely contain the crowd. During the day a delegation arrived to deliver a petition to the National Assembly, demanding the introduction of an 8-hour working day. The delegation was received by the Secretary-

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works*, Vol. 37, p. 329 (in Russian).

General and then the Chairman of the National Assembly, who promised to study all the issues. Demonstrations were held in 138 French cities and towns.

In Belgium the authorities did not oppose the celebration of the May Day. Over 100,000 workers of the coal basin stopped work. In Charleroi they marched across the city with an orchestra playing *La Marseillaise* carrying a banner saying: "What is a working man? Nothing. What should he be? Everything."

Mass marches, meetings, demonstrations and the handing of petitions to the authorities were held on May Day in other capitals and large cities of Europe. Some of them involved work stoppages, while others were held after working hours. These activities were of a peaceful nature in Sweden, Denmark, in Holland (the Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam) and in Portugal.

In Italy, however, events developed differently. The authorities declared martial law in the major cities and put troops on the alert. In Rome a strike was accompanied by a demonstration which was dispersed by the police. Clashes also took place in Turin, Bologna and Milan, as a result of which some workers were injured. Serious clashes with police also occurred in Livorno.

Demonstrations and public rallies were held in many cities of Spain. In Madrid a march turned into a mass demonstration. Over 20,000 people went to the palace of the head of government, where a delegation, headed by Pablo Iglesias, the leader of the Socialist Workers' Party, handed over the resolution of the international congress held in Paris. The demonstration in Barcelona had a dramatic end: martial law had been declared in the city, and some workers were killed or injured.

That Sunday, May Day was also celebrated in England. Frederick Engels took an active part in preparations for the celebration in London. His main hopes were connected with the Central Committee in charge of organizing the demonstration in Hyde Park. The Committee had been created by the workers of London's gas-industry enterprises (which had already partially achieved an 8-hour working day) together with other trade unions and East End workers' clubs.

"Around the seven speaker's stands of the Central Committee," Engels wrote in the paper of the Austrian Social-Democrats, "one could see a thick endless stream of people arriving with music and banners; over 100,000 people

were marching in columns and were joined by as many coming on their own; everywhere there was unanimity and excitement and at the same time complete order and organization.”* The demonstration was truly international. The participants were addressed by Paul Lafargue, who stood on the speaker’s stand next to Engels. The speech by Sergei Stepnyak-Kravchinsky, a Russian revolutionary, was also a success. Among the English orators was Bernard Shaw, and Eduard Bernstein spoke in the name of German Social-Democrats.

Engels thought that the demonstration had been very successful. “I consider the fact that on May 4, 1890, the English proletariat woke from its 40-year hybernation to rejoin its class movement..., the great international army, to be the most important and wonderful outcome of the May Day holiday,” he wrote. “This is a fact of historical significance... The grandchildren of the old Chartists are joining the militant columns.”***

May Day demonstrations were also held in America. In the United States the carpenters of Chicago and New York went on strike in April. On May 1 they were joined by the workers of other professions in Chicago, and a crowd of 35,000 marched along the streets. The carpenters’ strike, which lasted the whole month of May, ended in victory.

May Day was also marked in some Latin American countries. For example, the Workers’ Club in Mexico City organized a demonstration in which local workers and immigrants from European countries took part. A big demonstration was held in Havana, Cuba, where the participants sang the Riego Hymn and La Marseillaise and the speakers expressed solidarity with European and American workers.

Engels believed that the first May Day proletarian celebration “was a history-making event not only because of its general character, which made it the first international action of the struggle of the working class, but also because it has made it possible to state that there has been highly encouraging progress of the movement in various countries.”*** It was not by chance that Engels dated his new foreword to the German edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* May 1, 1890, in which he recalled how 42 years before Marx

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works*, Vol. 22, p. 69 (in Russian).

** *Ibid.*, pp. 64, 69, 70.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 64.

and himself urged, "Working men of all countries, unite!" Back then, however, few responded to this call, but now "the European and American proletariat was reviewing their combat forces, which for the first time have been mobilized into a single army for the sake of one immediate goal: the legislative approval of a normal 8-hour working day... How I wish Marx were here to see it with his own eyes!"*

May Day of 1890 showed that simultaneous actions in different countries were possible and effective. Still, in no country had the goal been achieved, so it was decided to hold new and better organized demonstrations of an even more energetic and mass character.

At the same time, there were disagreements within the workers' movement. Although they had previously initiated the May Day strike, the reformist leaders of the American Federation of Labour were opposed to making it into a general one going beyond economic demands. They also questioned the choice of the date, saying that in many places May 1 was "moving day", that on this day the weather was often bad and in northern cities the leaves on the trees were not even out. They instead suggested that the celebration should be held on the first Monday of September, the traditional date of Labour Day. The French anarchists, on the other hand, said that a peaceful demonstration was not enough, that it could even hurt their cause, and proposed instead that the celebration should be of the "nature of a mutiny", without which, they claimed, there were no truly popular movements.

Nor were the Marxists in complete agreement on the issue. The French Socialists insisted that the demonstration should be held on the same day—May 1—in all countries. In view of the irreconcilable stand of the trade-union leaders in England, this would have prevented the majority of workers from joining the demonstration. The German Social-Democrats feared that a general strike would cause repressions on the part of authorities and even more widespread lock-outs than had happened the previous year. They, like their British counterparts, also leaned towards holding the demonstration on the first Sunday of May. The French Socialists appealed to Liebknecht and Engels to settle the question.

Engels realized the effectiveness of a simultaneous international action. "Naturally it would be very nice to see all the

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 63 (in Russian).

socialist workmen in the Old and the New World celebrate May 1st on the same day," he wrote.* However, it was necessary to take the specific conditions in every country into account. "You, French," he answered Paul Lafargue, "are very fond of uniformity, which is a wonderful thing if it does not cost you too much. Yet to destroy our chances in Germany and make a true success in England impossible for the sake of uniformity would be pedantic."** At the same time, Engels did not support those German Social-Democrats who thought that the demonstrations should always be held on the first Sunday of May.

The next year, 1891, May Day was held in an especially organized fashion in Austria-Hungary. It had a special significance there, because the workers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire were practically completely denied any participation in the elections, and thus the May Day demonstrations gave them a chance to express their demands and sentiments. Like the year before, the demonstration in Vienna was a success. Although the authorities had banned all marches, meetings and celebrations and confiscated the special May Day paper, various workers' publications and numerous leaflets were published and distributed anyway, calling for a strike. And the strike took place.

The German Social-Democrats issued a special illustrated May Day paper for the first time.

Mass demonstrations, rallies and popular festivities were held on Sunday, May 3, in all the major cities of Germany. There were no clashes with the authorities.

The situation in France was different. In Paris the workers' organizations failed to achieve unity and they held marches and meetings on different dates. In Lyon and other cities the peaceful marches were dispersed by the police and troops were mobilized. The demonstration in the small town of Fourmies in the Ardennes took a tragic turn. Troops that had been sent there opened fire on the workers using new rifles which they had just received. They killed nine people, including two children, and injured over 30. At first, the government refused to set up a commission to investigate the accident, stating that the troops were simply doing their duty.

* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 404.

** Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 20 (in Russian).

The funeral of the victims turned into an impressive demonstration in Calais.

But instead of punishing the true perpetrators of the massacre, the authorities brought charges against Paul Lafargue, who three weeks before May 1 spoke at a rally in Fourmies, for "instigating a mutiny". Although it was revealed at the trial that false testimony and forgery had been used, Lafargue was sentenced to a year in jail. This caused a wave of nationwide protests. At run-off elections in Lille he was nominated a parliamentary candidate. While in jail Lafargue wrote an address to the electors urging them to act as the true judges as regards who had organized the massacre in Fourmies. Lafargue, the "protest candidate", was elected, and in November 1891 a revolutionary Marxist became a French deputy for the first time.

In Italy clashes between demonstrators and the police took place in Rome and Florence. Dozens of workers were arrested. Arrests also took place in Spain.

May Day demonstrations were also held in Switzerland, Holland, Portugal and Scandinavian countries.

The results of the second celebration of May Day were summarized at the Congress of the Second International in Brussels in August 1891. The proposal of the German and English delegations on holding the celebration on the first Sunday of May was rejected. The Congress' resolution confirmed the decision of the Paris Congress and added that May Day was a common holiday of the workers of all countries on which they must demonstrate their common interests and solidarity. It was stated that May Day should be connected with strikes unless the conditions in a particular country made that impossible. The English delegates were the only ones who voted against this resolution, though they said that their reasons were tactical, not a matter of principle.

The next year, 1892, the date of the celebration was not an issue, since May 1 fell on a Sunday. The holiday was enthusiastically celebrated in many countries. On the same day the Labour Party in France achieved success in municipal elections. In Belgium May Day demonstrations and rallies were held under the slogan "Universal suffrage and an 8-hour working day!" Although the authorities had banned the holding of demonstrations and meetings, the celebration entailed no serious clashes.

In 1893 May Day demonstrations in most European countries were accompanied by strikes and numerous meet-

ings, rallies and marches, which were of a more massive scale in Austria-Hungary and Germany than they were in France and Italy. In England meetings were held not only in London but also in other major industrial centres, such as Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh. In Belgium the Socialists and trade unions celebrated a recent victory: after a political strike and powerful demonstrations in Brussels, Antwerpen, Ghent and Mons in April they had forced the authorities to agree to an election reform. In Bulgaria the workers of Sofia and Plovdiv celebrated May Day for the first time. The authorities had banned the demonstration, and there were clashes between the workers and the police as a result. Many workers, who defended themselves with bricks and cobble-stones, were injured, causing a wave of protest among the population.

On the eve of May Day some 300 residents of Melbourne, Australia, held a rally with a brass band outside the city. The meeting's resolution sent fraternal greetings to the workers of all countries and proclaimed that the celebration of Labour Day by the workers of the whole world had become a symbol of international brotherhood and inevitable liberation.

At the Congress of the International held in Zurich in August 1893, two important additions to the resolution on the celebration of May Day were adopted.

The first one stated that it was the duty of the Social-Democratic parties of all countries to strive to make May 1 a day-off and to support all attempts in this direction undertaken locally and by separate organizations. The second addition considerably broadened the goals of the workers' movement: May Day demonstrations for an 8-hour working day were simultaneously to be considered as a manifestation of the firm intention of the working class to do away with class injustices through social transformations and thus embark on the only road leading to peace at home and internationally.

THE MOVEMENT:

From Illegal May Day Celebrations to Militant Demonstrations in Russia

The Paris Socialist Congress that made the decision to celebrate May Day was addressed by the Russian revolutionary Georgi Plekhanov. In his first speech at the Congress he pointed out that the revolutionary movement in Russia could triumph only if it was a working class movement. He warned, however, that under the tsarist autocracy it would be impossible to carry out the decision on celebrating May Day. But he was only partially right.

In April 1890 the first leaflets were spread in St. Petersburg expressing the hope that the Russian workers, together with the proletariat of the world, would soon be able to mark the day of international solidarity. In Poland, which was then part of the Russian empire, May Day demonstrations started in the same year as in the West. On May 1, 1890, some 10,000 workers in Warsaw went on strike at many factories and railroad workshops. Although military patrols were searching the streets, people gathered in workers' districts and at St. Alexander's Square. Leaflets were distributed which had been published clandestinely. Clashes with police and soldiers followed, and many workers were arrested.

The next year some 25,000-30,000 workers from Warsaw and other Polish cities again went on strike and held demonstrations. In Lodz a demonstration was broken up by police, with many people being killed or injured.

The first May Day celebration in Russia proper was held illegally in the environs of St. Petersburg. It was organized by Mikhail Brusnev, a student at a technical school and the leader of the Social-Democratic Labour Union. Some of the members of this organization suggested that there should be a march along the streets of Narvskaya Zastava. This idea was rejected, however, because it could have meant the destruction of workers' groups whose formation had taken so much effort. Around noon on the first Sunday of May (May 5

according to the Old Style calendar, or May 18, New Style) workers from the Putilov, Obukhov, Baltiisky and other plants and the shipyard made their way in twos and threes to a forest glade by the Yekateringofka River. Those from Vasilievsky Island arrived in boats. Altogether there were as many as 200 people, all wearing their best clothes. Somebody climbed a birch tree and put up a small red flag. Somebody else attached a wooden board on a tree which read "Working men of all countries, unite!"

With mass demonstrations in Russia being practically impossible, the Russian proletariat joined the international celebration in its own way and felt itself part of the world workers' movement.

Gradually, May Day celebrations began to be held in more and more places in Russia, including Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod. In 1895 Moscow's Labour Union put out its first appeal, in which it told about how workers abroad were celebrating May Day and urged that the day be marked in whatever way it could be, given the political situation. In Moscow the first May Day celebration was held on April 30. Some 250-300 representatives from 35 factories secretly arrived at an agreed-upon place. The orators spoke about the organization of the working class, the struggle for political freedom and the 8-hour working day. The participants were in a festive spirit and spent the whole day under a red flag mounted on a little hill. The speeches were followed by the singing of "Dubinushka" and learning "The Labour Marseillaise".

In 1896 May Day was observed illegally in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Saratov, Minsk and Vilno (Vilnius), and strikes and demonstrations swept practically all the industrial centres of Poland.

In 1897 the police department sent local authorities a special instruction, which read: "Lately there has been increased activity among factory workers and attempts to stage strikes at a large number of factories under various pretexts. Current information indicates that strikes are planned for April 19 or May 1, New Style, which is considered a workers' holiday abroad." The document instructed the local authorities to use punitive measures and to arrest the activists.

In spite of this, the issuance of leaflets in St. Petersburg continued. The First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party held in March 1898 in Minsk adopted the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which was

reprinted in Social-Democratic publications in Germany, France and England. Not long after that, the printing house of Kiev's *Rabochaya Gazeta* published the first general party proclamation called "May Day Appeal".

In 1899 May Day celebrations were held not only in industrial centres, but in smaller towns and villages as well.

In 1900 May Day strikes became more widespread in Russia along with May Day celebrations held illegally on the outskirts of cities. Workers struck in St. Petersburg and Nikolayev, but the strike movement assumed the greatest scope in Kharkov. The recently created Committee of the RSDLP passed out 2,000 copies of May Day leaflets. Almost two thirds of the local workers joined the strike that began on May 1. The workers of the railway shopworks marched to join the workers from the factories downtown, but were stopped and scattered by the troops. Towards the evening one more demonstration was held, at which there was singing and a red flag was carried. There were numerous arrests. The local authorities, alarmed by the situation, informed the Minister of Internal Affairs: "The speed with which the workers assimilate socialist ideas is especially notable. Just a year ago the local workers did not show much sympathy or approval for using the May Day holiday for socialist demonstrations, but this year the idea has become very popular and is attracting numerous followers..."

The events in Kharkov showed that the celebration of May Day in Russia could potentially turn into a major political demonstration.

The workers' activities were becoming increasingly politicized. On the eve of May 1, 1901, Iskra, an organization that had recently been set up abroad and in Russia, put out a leaflet which urged, "Comrades, along with the demand for an 8-hour working day in your demonstrations you should include demands for political freedom, for the replacement of the tsars' autocracy for the autocracy of the people—free administration of the state by elected representatives of the whole people!"

In spite of the measures taken by the authorities, the scope of the demonstrations that year was wider than in the previous years, and their organization was improved. Demonstrations were held in Vilno, Warsaw, Belostok, Grodno, Minsk, Gomel, Dvinsk, Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa and Simferopol. However, the biggest actions took place in Tiflis (Tbilisi) and St. Petersburg.

In Tiflis, for example, thousands of workers marched towards the city's centre on April 22. Police units, both on foot and mounted, and army detachments that had been specially concentrated nearby failed to stop the march. The Social-Democratic organization of Tiflis stressed in a leaflet the courage and decisiveness of the Caucasian workers, who were stretching out a hand to their comrades in Europe and in Russia.

In St. Petersburg the authorities were better prepared, and the demonstration on April 22 never materialized. The demonstration was postponed till May 1, but on that day the Minister of Internal Affairs ordered a review of the local garrison to be held on Nevsky Prospekt which disrupted the workers' planned demonstration. In spite of the arrests of activists, a number of factories went on strike. The biggest demonstration, which began on May 7, was held in the Obukhov steel factory. All of its 3,600 workers stopped work on a signal from the factory's whistle. The Social-Democratic organization demanded a raise in pay, the end of night shifts, the reinstatement of those who had been fired for striking on May 1, and that May Day be made an official holiday.

Armed factory guards, police and army troops were used to suppress the action of the Obukhov factory workers. The workers, who had built barricades in the street, were fired upon. Eight workers were killed and many more injured. This clash later became known as the "Obukhov defence" and raised the workers of St. Petersburg to struggle. The following day 4,500 more workers from neighbouring factories, the Alexandrovsky mechanical factory and the Nevsky ship-building factory, also went on strike. The management had to make a compromise, but nonetheless took ruthless revenge on the workers: 800 workers from the Obukhov factory were exiled and 29 were sentenced to prison terms.

Lenin referred to the "Obukhov defence" as a desperate action, an occasional manifestation of popular unrest. "These outbursts," he wrote, "arouse to conscious life the widest sections of the workers, oppressed by poverty and ignorance, and stimulate in them a noble hatred for the oppressors and enemies of liberty."*

Combined with political strikes, the demonstrations became more impressive and better organized. Thousands of May Day leaflets were printed abroad and in dozens of

* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 26.

Russian cities and were passed out on the streets, in theatres and at meetings. Special addresses were issued to women and soldiers. The leaflets reached even the remotest villages.

In 1902 demonstrations were held in St. Petersburg, Kharkov, Nizhny Novgorod, Rostov, Baku, Warsaw, Vilno, Odessa and other cities. Yet the most memorable was the Sormovo demonstration.

On May 1 workers of machine-building factories in Sormovo started gathering in groups. About 4,000 or 5,000 people ignored the police's demand that they disperse. The arriving troops began to break up the crowd using the butts of their rifles, and the unarmed workers began to disperse. However, one of them, who was carrying a banner and was surrounded by a small group of workers, stood firm, shouting: "I'm not a coward and I won't run away!" The big banner he was holding read: "Down with autocracy! Long live political freedom!" The man, a fitter, was named Pyotr Zalomov, a Social-Democrat and the leader of the Sormovo workers. The soldiers beat him severely with the butts of their rifles.

Zalomov and other arrested workers were staunch during their trial in Moscow. "Our conditions," he said, "were so bad that the workers were forced to struggle against obstacles in their way, even though to do so meant a loss of freedom or even of one's life." In his letter, "From Behind Bars", Zalomov wrote that he and his comrades were sustained by belief in the rightness of their cause.

This letter and his courtroom speech were published not only in Russia but were also reported by the Austrian paper *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and the Italian journal *Il Socialismo*.

The May Day celebration in 1903 turned into a nationwide action by the Russian proletariat. The police department was alarmed by the increase in revolutionary propaganda among all strata of the population, as well as by the attempts to refuse to work on May Day, which was happening on a mass scale, and by the street demonstrations, in which like-minded intellectuals, mainly students, were joining the workers. In spite of numerous arrests, many cities had May Day strikes and demonstrations. May Day leaflets calling for political struggle against the autocracy were issued by 30 committees and groups of the RSDLP.

Lenin pointed out that the urban workers in Russia "at the present time... come out into the streets and squares and publicly demand *freedom*... They inscribe on their banners

and cry out: 'Down with the autocracy!' The day will soon come when the urban workers will rise not merely to march shouting through the streets, but for the great and final struggle... And the peasants, too, will then rise all over Russia and go to the aid of the urban workers, will fight to the end for the freedom of the workers and peasants. The tsar's hordes will be unable to withstand that onslaught. Victory will go to the working people..."*

* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 427-428.

THE DEBATE:

A Review of the Militant Forces or Popular Festivities?

During its early history in the West, May Day was an expression of the sharp conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the latter of course having the support of the state. This was especially pronounced where the ruling circles and the employers, frightened by the growing strength of the proletariat, resorted to bans and cruel repressions. However, gradually and at first unobtrusively in some countries, especially those where the bourgeoisie leaned towards compromises and the leadership of the workers' movement was of a reformist nature, May Day started to become routine and to lose its initial militant nature.

This tendency was noticed by Frederick Engels even back when May Day celebrations were still on the upsurge.

In England, attendance at the Sunday marches from the Thames to Hyde Park and the demonstrations in the latter steadily dropped. In different years it was attended by from 20,000 to 100,000 participants. Later, the demonstrations were replaced by a festival of peace and labour, which the English Socialists started to celebrate in a London suburb in the form of a theatre performance. In 1900 it was attended by 30,000 people. However, with the Boer War going on, such an international demonstration was viewed as a challenge to the government. The performance was interrupted by a group of young conservatives who started singing "God Save the Queen!" Indignant, the spectators stood up and started singing *La Marseillaise* in response.

In the United States the systematic pressure exerted by the American Federation of Labour headed by Samuel Gompers in order to give the workers' May Day actions a strictly economic and disjointed character caused the size of the demonstrations to shrink. Small rallies started being held, especially since the first Monday of September had already been announced the official Labour Day.

In Belgium the well-attended May Day demonstrations soon turned into festive marches and carnivals with singing, games and fireworks. Even some moderate Socialists, remembering how suffrage had been broadened through a militant general strike, were concerned about the change in May Day celebrations.

In France meetings and mass street marches were held, primarily in the industrial centres and at ports. However, the lack of unity between the workers' parties had a negative effect on the demonstrations, which lacked a unity of purpose. The syndicalist workers were displeased that May Day had lost its revolutionary character, which had made them take part in it with so much enthusiasm. At the same time, they failed to come up with anything better than to suggest that this movement be channelled along the American way, i.e., towards the achievement of an 8-hour working day, to which end they proposed giving up annual demonstrations and instead spending a few years in preparation for a simultaneous general strike.

In Germany, the country which had the most organized Social-Democratic Party and where trade unions were getting to be an increasingly impressive force, May Day celebrations had become firmly rooted. But gradually it became clear that the issue of whether to mark it on May 1 or on the first Sunday of May was one of principle and not just a matter of the concrete conditions. In fact, what gave the holiday its militant nature was the accompanying downing of tools. Staging strikes, of course, involved a number of complications. The German capitalists had set up special organizations to oppose them and responded by locking workers out, hiring strikebreakers, black-listing workers, etc. Strikes also needed funding from the trade unions, and these expenses could become substantial if the strike was large and became protracted.

Given the broadening of the activity of the trade unions, whose membership was continuously growing, the electoral success of the Social-Democratic Party and the increased complexity of its parliamentary activity, the issue of May Day was gradually pushed into the background. Noting this tendency with alarm, Rosa Luxemburg, the leader of the revolutionary wing of the Social-Democrats, said that May Day was gradually turning into popular festivities which were viewed rather calmly by the bourgeoisie.

On the eve of each May Day, the Social-Democratic Party

of Germany was still publishing slogans, big editions of the holiday issues of newspapers and magazines, postcards, and a special illustrated newspaper. On the holiday, mass trade-union meetings were usually held followed by demonstrations or festivities in the afternoon or in the evening. The tradition appeared of wearing a red carnation in one's buttonhole.

Although the decision that workers should demand a day off on May 1 and should suspend work on that day whenever possible was confirmed at each party congress, it was coming up against increasing opposition on the part of the trade-union leaders who handled the treasury, which supplied the strike relief funds.

The Congress of the International held in 1896 in London confirmed the decisions of the previous congresses and called May Day the most expedient form of action and strikes, the most effective form of struggle. In connection with the increasingly tense international situation, the Congress added the struggle for peace to this slogan.

The anthem of proletarian struggle, the Internationale, began its march around the world from France. The verses were by Eugene Pottier, a participant in the Paris Commune. They were written when it was clear that the Commune would fall, but were nevertheless permeated with belief in the ultimate triumph of an international commune. They were published only in 1887, shortly before Pottier, having wandered all over the world for many years, died. A year later, an amateur musician named Pierre Degeyter composed music for Pottier's lyrics and the Internationale was performed for the first time in Lille. Already by the middle of the 1890s, the anthem had become known in Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Russia and other countries.

The Amsterdam Congress of the International was held in 1904. The Congress again recommended to the Social-Democratic parties and trade unions of all countries that they hold annual May Day demonstrations and mass political strikes.

The decision of the Congress on May Day was supported by many European Socialists, but the reformist trade-union leaders showed open disagreement with it. It is now impossible to say how successful their campaign would have been if not for the revolution in Russia, which brought about a fundamental change in the international situation.

THE UPSURGE:

During the First Russian Revolution

The revolution of 1905 in Russia began on January 9, the day which came to be known as "Bloody Sunday", when troops opened fire on a peaceful demonstration of workers in Palace Square in St. Petersburg, who were trying to give a petition to the tsar. This set off a wave of popular unrest in the country.

A few leaflets were published in spring before May Day. A May Day address written by Lenin was published abroad and reprinted by many party committees in Russia. It said that on May Day the workers of the world were celebrating their awakening to the light and knowledge, and their unification into an international association for joint struggle against oppression. It went on:

"Jews and Christians, Armenians and Tatars, Poles and Russians, Finns and Swedes, Letts and Germans—all, all of them march together under the one common banner of socialism... On the First of May this union of the workers of all countries, international Social-Democracy, reviews its forces and gathers its strength for a further unremitting and unswerving struggle for freedom, equality and fraternity."*

The Bolsheviks, the consistently revolutionary wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, were urging the workers to make a sober estimate of their forces so as not to waste them, to store arms, form units, hold meetings, and put out publications. They described these activities as the immediate tasks of the preparations for decisive battles.

"...To come out on the streets on May Day unarmed would be crazy and to come out armed would be hasty," one of the leaflets said. "Yet we still have a way to mark the international holiday of the proletariat in a worthy manner. Announce a general strike on the 1st of May... Let us call our great revolutionary army out for a general review... Down with autocracy! Long live the revolution!"

* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 348.

The St. Petersburg committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party warned the workers of the capital that on May 1 they would be faced by troops brought into the city by the government. An armed uprising on that day would give the government a pretext for suppressing the demonstrators. However, the action that the RSDLP scheduled for May 1 was not a general battle, but a general review of revolutionary forces. In view of the fact that May 1 that year was also Easter, the committee urged that work be suspended for two days, the 1st and the 2nd of May.

In Moscow martial law was declared on the eve of the holiday and troops, including artillery, were on the alert, ready to act against the demonstrators. Infantry, cavalry and cossack forces were concentrated in Sokolniki, a popular park. In spite of this, dozens of thousands of workers gathered and spread out over the whole park. However, they were unable to hold a big organized rally because as soon as a group of people assembled soldiers and policemen would immediately converge on them.

The outdoor celebration in Maryina Roshcha was more successful: the cossacks arrived only after the speaker had finished a lengthy address.

The demonstrations in the city of Ivanovo developed into a six-week strike involving 70,000 textile workers. The strike started on May 12. It gave rise to a new form of the revolutionary workers' self-government—a meeting of deputies, which became Russia's first city Soviet of People's Deputies.

Over 220,000 workers from almost 200 cities and towns joined the May Day strikes, demonstrations and outdoor celebrations. These activities, which had a clearly expressed political character, marked the beginning of a further increase in the revolutionary upsurge of the proletariat, which was joined by the peasants.

The beginning of the first Russian revolution and the "Bloody Sunday" was already making a stir around the world. The German revolutionaries were among the first to express their profound solidarity with the struggle of the Russian proletariat. Addressing a multi-thousand meeting in Leipzig, Karl Liebknecht said that the Russian revolution was also a German cause, that the German Social-Democrats were together with the Russian proletariat and that the freedom of the Russian proletariat was also the freedom of the German proletariat.

May Day 1905, an illustrated paper put out by the German Social-Democrats, in an article entitled "1780-1889-1905" pointed out that May Day had never been held in such a stormy and revolutionary international situation. The article, which was written by Karl Kautsky, said that under the stagnant influence of the previous years the celebration had in some places been turned into a euphoric popular festival, but that now May Day must become what it was originally meant to be—an annual review of the readiness of the proletariat to take up the political and trade-union struggle. It went on to state that in every country where there was a proletariat, the May Day holiday should urge workers to mobilize their forces.

Georg Ledebour, the author of another article, referring to the revolutions of 1789 and 1848 as a reminder, stated that in spite of its small proportion in the country's population, the Russian and Polish proletariat was at that time more educated and mature than the French or German workers had been. The May Day demand for an 8-hour working day, its declaration of "war on war" must be voiced with a special force, Ledebour wrote, adding that everybody involved in the struggle for the power of the proletariat should triple his efforts.

Clara Zetkin devoted an article to Russia's women revolutionaries. She called May 1905 the Red May.

In 1906 revolutionary Russia continued to show to the whole world examples of selfless struggle in spite of separate failures. Despite growing repressions, May Day was celebrated throughout almost the entire country.

In Europe, May Day of 1906 was celebrated if anything even more under the influence of the Russian revolution than it had been the year before. Calling upon the workers of all countries to suspend work and join the demonstrations, the appeal of the International Socialist Bureau stressed that the old ways were being shattered everywhere and workers were uniting against the exploiters. An understanding was growing of the need for international solidarity among the proletariat of the world for the sake of preserving peace between the peoples and undermining the military plans of the capitalist governments. The appeal was signed by August Bebel, Victor Adler, Camille Huysmans, San Katayama, Paul Singer, Filippo Turati and Vladimir Lenin.

THE DOUBTS:

From a Fall to a Growth of Anti-War Activity

The defeat of the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907 and the growing influence of opportunism in the European Social-Democratic movement at first caused a drop in the strength of May Day demonstrations.

Starting in 1908 the number of May Day strikes and their participants in Russia went down considerably. Strikes and rallies were successfully held only in a few cities. Factory owners were making wide use of the tactics of lock-outs and black-listing. Illegal May Day celebrations held outside cities and organized despite the arrests of Social-Democratic leaders, were once again coming to the foreground.

A leaflet put out by the Russian paper *Social-Democrat* on the occasion of May Day in 1910 and distributed in many Russian cities, told about the growth of the international workers' movement, for instance, that trade unions already united eight million workers and that the Social-Democratic parties had no less than two million members and had gathered up to 10 million votes at elections.

The leaflet went on to say that the past year was difficult for workers in all countries, but that there had been a major strike in Sweden. The Swedish strikers received a considerable amount of aid in the form of small donations from workers from all over the world. In Spain workers were actively participating in protests against colonial exploitation. In Germany a struggle was waged for universal suffrage in the elections to the Prussian Landtag. The United States, too, had been swept by a wave of strikes.

At the same time the Social-Democrats in Germany and in other countries were in the midst of an internal struggle between the revolutionaries and the reformists. The attitude to May Day was one of the manifestations of this struggle. Rosa Luxemburg stressed that May Day was an inseparable part of the international class struggle and therefore was a

vivid reflection of all its turns. It was only an outward impression, she said, that May Day was a monotonous repetition of similar speeches, demands and resolutions. In fact it reflected the changing situation in the class struggle. Thus the question of whether the reformist trade-union leaders would be able to "bury May Day" or whether it would retain its militant nature and become even more that way was of principled importance.

The gap between the psychology of the trade-union leaders who were most concerned with figuring out how much it would cost to support workers fired for going on strike on May Day and the psychology of the revolutionaries who were risking not just their material well-being, but their very lives was widening.

In 1910 a new upsurge of the mass struggle of the working class in Germany began under the banner of doing away with the reactionary practice of tri-class suffrage in Prussia and other lands.

In 1912 May Day was held in the wake of the major victory that the Social-Democratic Party of Germany had won in the elections to the Reichstag. With 4.25 million votes and 110 seats, the party had become the country's major political force.

In 1912 the workers of Russia also marked the holiday with strong, militant actions. The revolutionary spirit among the workers had been growing for a few years, which manifested itself in strikes and demonstrations.

Lenin pointed out an important feature of these actions:

"Hundreds of thousands of St. Petersburg proletarians, followed by workers throughout Russia, resorted to strikes and street demonstrations not as one of the separate classes of bourgeois society, not with 'their own' merely economic slogans, but as the leader raising aloft the banner of the revolution *for the whole people, on behalf of the whole people, and with the aim of awakening and drawing into the struggle all the classes who need freedom and are capable of striving for it.*"*

This feature made the Russian working class stand out in the general upsurge of the proletarian struggle that had swept Europe.

The world was increasingly living under the shadow of the coming world war, while the working class was making every

* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, pp. 112-113.

effort to prevent it. The Congress of the International held in 1912 in Basel unanimously adopted a manifesto stating that given the situation in Europe at that time and the aspirations of the working class, the governments could not unleash a war without endangering themselves... Workers considered it a crime, the manifesto said, to kill each other for the sake of increasing capitalist profits.

May Day celebrated a jubilee in 1914. On the occasion of its 25th anniversary Rosa Luxemburg stated in one of her speeches that the Social-Democratic parties throughout the world had grown since 1890, they had won positions in parliaments, created a widely-read press, were leading systematic educational campaigns and had women's and youth organizations.

Rosa Luxemburg considered it a major political achievement of the 25 years of marking May Day that in the upcoming battles the proletariat would be led to victory not by parliamentary campaigns but only by mass proletarian actions of great force. However, the road to this goal was more complicated than it seemed then. Two months after she uttered those words the world war broke out.

The beginning of the war illuminated the widening gap which had formed between the words and the deeds of the leaders of international Social-Democracy. In Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, England and other countries, all the decisions of the International were immediately forgotten. Having approved the fratricidal war between the workers of different countries, the Social-Democratic parties sided with their national bourgeoisie. Only a few of these parties remained loyal to internationalism and the revolutionary class struggle, among them the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Tesnyaks in Bulgaria, the Serbian left-wing Social-Democrats and a small group of German revolutionaries.

It seemed that during the war there was no interest in the proletarian holiday of May Day. Celebrating it, especially on an international scale, was the last thing on anybody's mind, for in all countries participation in it could be regarded as treason. Nonetheless, in May 1915 the Bolsheviks put out leaflets which met with wide response.

"At this great historic moment," wrote the St. Petersburg committee of the RSDLP, "a difficult but honorable mission has been placed on the shoulders of young Russian Social-Democracy, which, at any rate, has already displayed its staunchness in the struggle. Unlike the Western European

Social-Democrats who fell out of the habit of revolutionary struggle during the lengthy period of peaceful development, which led to the flourishing of opportunism and allowed the banner of the proletarian struggle to slip out of their hands, the task of the Russian Social-Democrats, whose every step is marked with their blood and sacrifices, have picked up this banner so as to carry it unblemished through the nationalist passions. The young Russian proletariat, convinced of its ultimate victory, has undertaken this mission. Life shows that it is not alone..."

The thought that the Russian proletariat would have international support was confirmed. For example, two left-wing members of the French metal workers' union, Rosmer and Marheim, put out, for May Day of 1915, a newspaper issue which said that the war was not the workers' cause.

In Germany Karl Liebknecht was the only deputy who voted in December 1914 in the Reichstag against granting war credits and issued a statement describing the war as an imperialist venture. On the eve of May Day, 1915, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin and their comrades set up a group called "International" and began publishing a journal of the same name.

Before the next year's May Day Karl Liebknecht decided that only personal example could stir up the masses for political activity and wrote a leaflet which was published in thousands of copies. In it he urged those who were against the war to come at 8 p.m. to Potsdam Square in Berlin. Liebknecht's leaflet contained the first direct call for the overthrow of the government, the instigators of the war, and those who were making profits on it.

In spite of a police cordon, as many as 10,000 people gathered in the square, including women and young people. "Down with the war! Down with the government!", Liebknecht proclaimed while addressing them. The demonstrators took up the chant. Police seized Liebknecht and arrested him. People stayed in the square until midnight. Although mounted police attacked them, trying to force the crowd to disperse, the demonstrators stayed there, singing The Labour Marseillaise and the Socialist March.

That demonstration in Berlin made an impression on the whole country. Liebknecht's comrades put out a number of leaflets in which they urged workers to prevent the sentencing of a man who had sacrificed himself for their cause. The

arrest warrant, which was made public, ordered the detention of Karl Liebknecht, a soldier of a construction battalion. The charge was having made repeated public calls for civil disobedience and distributing leaflets on May 1, 1916, in Berlin. During the military trial, which sentenced Karl Liebknecht to hard labour, numerous meetings and demonstrations were held in several German cities. It was the first wave of political strikes that had happened in the country since the beginning of the war. Liebknecht's name became a symbol of heroic struggle against the war.

May 1, 1916 was marked by partial strikes in France and Italy and clashes in Vienna and Prague. On the same day the First International Socialist Conference in Kienthal issued an appeal "To the Plundered and Annihilated Nations" in which it denounced the social-chauvinists and called upon workers everywhere to use all means available to them to stop the world war and reach immediate peace with no annexations. The conference's participants, of which Lenin was one, observed May 1 as the holiday of international solidarity.

In Russia May Day 1917 came after the February bourgeois-democratic revolution that overthrew tsarism in the country. The proletariat, which had led the struggle of the soldiers and peasants, won a democratic republic and freedom of assembly and set up a broad network of Soviets of the Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. This resulted in a peculiar situation of dual power. On the one hand, there were the Soviets, and on the other, the bourgeois Provisional Government, which was doing nothing to stop the war or meet the other demands of the working people.

Still, for the first time ever in Russia, May Day was proclaimed an official holiday. The Petrograd city Soviet passed a special decision to celebrate it on April 18 according to the old calendar so that the demonstrations in Russia would be held on the same day as those held by the working people in the West.

Starting early in the morning, crowds of workers moved from the outskirts of Petrograd to the centre to celebrate May Day. For the first time, the demonstrators who were carrying red flags, were not harassed by police and cossack attacks.

A huge rally was held in the Field of Mars. Army orchestras played *La Marseillaise*, marches and revolutionary songs. Speakers used trucks decorated with red bunting as platforms. Among the speakers was Lenin, who later that day outlined the tasks of the Russian revolution in another

speech delivered in Palace Square. The same evening he addressed 40,000 men at a meeting of workers at the Okhta powder factory.

Meanwhile, the Provisional Government sent a note to its allies that day, promising to abide by the obligations of the tsarist government and carry on with the war until victory. When the note was made public, the whole of revolutionary Petrograd became agitated.

May Day demonstrations involving thousands of people were held throughout the country. In Moscow and other cities marches and meetings were held under the slogans of terminating the war, concluding a democratic peace and strengthening the international solidarity of the proletariat in all countries.

On May 4, 1917, *Pravda* published an appeal of the Central and Political Committees of the RSDLP to the soldiers of the countries at war. It was written by Lenin and was later translated into foreign languages. It said:

"Every victorious step of the revolution will save hundreds of thousands and millions of people from death, ruin and starvation.

"Peace to the hovels, war on the palaces! Peace to the workers of all countries! Long live the fraternal unity of the revolutionary workers of all countries! Long live socialism!"*

On May Day large groups of soldiers fraternized on many fronts, especially at the positions of the Austrian infantry.

In Germany, where the government had been shocked by the overthrow of Russian tsarism, the anti-war movement became noticeably activated. In April, over half a million workers in Berlin, Braunschweig, Dresden, Leipzig, Magdeburg and other cities went on strike in protest against the cutting of the food rations and demanding that peace be concluded immediately. The government was able to split and suppress the strike with the help of right-wing trade-union leaders. A leaflet put out by the revolutionary group Spartacus urged workers to mark May Day by holding a general strike and a peace demonstration. However, the trade-union and Social-Democratic leaders cooperated with the military leadership, which denounced the strikers as "traitors to the state". Partial strikes and public rallies were held only in Berlin and a few other cities.

* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 188.

In Austria-Hungary the workers suspended work for the first time since the beginning of the war. The government, which knew of their intention, went no further than to prohibit street demonstrations in the hope that the Social-Democrats would be able to keep the workers' actions under control. Nonetheless, the May Day celebration became a militant action. Demands for peace and the resignation of the government were also voiced at trade-union meetings.

In Italy state employees were granted permission to mark the traditional holiday. In France the May Day rally in Paris was attended by thousands of participants. The May Day strike affected practically all industrial regions of the country. There were also widespread anti-war actions in the army. Big rallies took place in England and Spain, and demonstrations were held in Romania. The biggest demonstration was held in Sweden, a neutral country: some 150,000 people came out to march on the streets of Stockholm.

For the first time ever May Day was marked in Asia.

A NEW QUALITY:

The Holiday in the Land of the Soviets

In 1918 the working people of the Soviet Union celebrated May Day without asking the authorities if they could do so for the first time, for now the power was in their own hands.

However, the overthrown exploiters and their foreign partners refused to accept their loss of power and privileges and set themselves against the new Soviet republic. The country had to pay a high price for peace with Germany, including the loss of rich industrial and agricultural regions, food shortages and the activization of counter-revolutionary forces. Central Russia found itself surrounded by a ring of war fronts.

In 1918 in Moscow, now the capital of the Soviet republic, on the first May Day after the October revolution representatives of all districts came out to demonstrate and marched to Red Square, where revolutionaries and the first victims of the Civil War had been buried by the Kremlin wall. The columns of marchers lowered standards and the bands played "You have fallen victim..." Lenin stood atop the Kremlin wall so that he could see the whole demonstration, and once Red Square was full he gave a speech. Working men and women and children with red frags marched in the parade, there was a car carrying textile workers which was decorated with red fabric and topped with a huge globe with a picture of Karl Marx, as well as a chariot with the emblems of agricultural workers. The parade only ended at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

In the early afternoon there was the first military parade of the Red Army in Khodynskoye Field. The army units marched for over an hour and after that pilots did flying stunts in the sky above the field. The celebration continued in the evening.

The entrances to the Kremlin and its towers, bridges and many buildings were decorated with garlands of fir branches and flowers. On the building of the Moscow City Soviet a poster was hung showing a worker with a hammer in his

hands breaking the old life and building a new one. "Long Live the Soviet Socialist Republic!" it proclaimed. A truck carried actors dressed in the costumes of various nationalities, a peasant woman with a sheaf of rye, and soldiers with red banners. Throughout it all orchestras could be heard playing the Internationale, La Marseillaise and other revolutionary songs.

By the beginning of 1920 the Red Army had won decisive victories over the internal counter-revolutionaries, the White Guards, the external interventionist forces and freed most of the country. With the war nearing an end, the Soviet Republic turned its attention to the priority tasks of economic construction and overcoming the destruction caused by the years of war. The unusually difficult winter and spring that year required the concentration of all forces and made it especially important that people should work with enthusiasm.

Back in April 1919, in response to the Party's call "to work in a revolutionary way", the railway workers of the Moscow-Kazan line held the country's first communist subbotnik, i.e., worked an extra 10 hours without pay. Lenin highly praised this initiative and called it "a great beginning", stressing that communist subbotniks "are of such enormous historical significance precisely because they demonstrate the conscious and voluntary initiative of the workers in developing the productivity of labour, in adopting a new labour discipline, in creating socialist conditions of economy and life."*

Gradually communist subbotniks started being held throughout the country on a monthly basis in order to help the army and transport. At the 9th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) held in April 1920 it was stated:

"In keeping with the great immediate tasks of the socialist revolution the Congress has decided to turn the international proletarian holiday of May 1, which this year falls on a Saturday, into an all-Russia subbotnik."

For the first time in history May Day was held as a festival of emancipated labour instead of under the traditional slogan of a shorter working day. At least 15 million people participated in the subbotnik. "We have shifted a huge mountain, a huge mass of conservatism, ignorance, stubborn adherence to the habits of 'freedom of trade' and of the 'free'

* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 423-424.

buying and selling of human labour-power like any other commodity," Lenin wrote in *Pervomaisky Subbotnik*, a newspaper published especially for the occasion. "We have begun to undermine and destroy the most deep-rooted prejudices, the firmest, age-long and ingrained habits."*

There was a lot of enthusiasm among the working people in the 1920s, a result of the introduction of a degree of self-management and of independence: workers had become the masters of their own country and enterprises. No one could imagine then that many of the newly-started democratic tendencies in the economy and in the life of society would soon be squashed by the growing control of the government and the diktat of the apparatus of the Party, of the Soviets and of the economic bodies.

With the coming of peace after the Civil War, new May Day slogans appeared. The slogans of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), which were reproduced on numerous posters, stressed the immediate economic tasks, as well as the tasks of strengthening the international positions of the Soviet Republic and its ties with the international workers' movement.

For instance, the main slogan of 1922 demonstrations concerned the need for closer unity between the urban and rural areas, between the working class and the peasants, and for further advancing the cause of socialism. In connection with Soviet Russia's first experience of participation in an international economic conference held in Genoa, one of the slogans said: "Our mandate to the Soviet delegation in Genoa: we have won, we are masters in our land, our gains are unassailable, the rights and the borders of the Soviet Republics are inviolable." At the same time one could read: "The Russian revolution is an effective international force."

In 1923 May Day demonstrations in Moscow and Petrograd were held separately in different districts, followed by fancy dress parties and sports performances in parks and squares. The columns of marchers from different enterprises were decorated with depictions of their products, and political and other scenes were improvised.

In 1923 Ernst Thälmann, a worker from Hamburg and one of the leaders of the German Communist Party, was among the foreign guests at the May Day celebration. He attended a rally held in Taganskaya Square in Moscow.

* V. I. Lenin. *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 124-125.

Anatoli Lunacharsky, the first People's Commissar of Education, introduced Ernst Thälmann to the gathering. Thälmann first addressed everyone with the Russian word for "comrades", and then, switching to his native German, passed on revolutionary greetings to the workers of Moscow from the workers of Hamburg. He thanked the working people of Soviet Russia for the shipment of food supplies they had sent to ease the hunger in the Ruhr area and assured them that the German working class would always remember their fraternal help. Thälmann handed out leaflets in Russian and German from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany, congratulating the Russian workers and peasants on May Day.

The May Day demonstration in 1924, a few months after Lenin's death, was held in Moscow's Red Square and was subdued and more modest than in previous years. There was neither the traditional military parade, the official speeches nor, of course, the festive fancy-dress performances. Facing the square in the middle of the Kremlin Wall stood the dark brown wooden Mausoleum with black trim flanked by lowered standards. The stands for viewing the parade had been set up some distance away. The slogans, which were written in various languages, said: "Working men of all countries, unite!" and "We shall be loyal to your behests!"

In 1925 and 1926 the slogan "We are growing, getting stronger and are building socialism. We shall build it. Let us increase our efforts tenfold for the full victory of socialism!", which stated the results and outlined the country's goal, became the main slogan proclaimed on May Day banners and posters. The priority tasks were spelled out in the slogans: "Through industrialization to socialism", "Old factories have been put into operation, it's time to build new ones!" and "The unity of the proletariat and poor peasants with the middle peasants are the basis of the USSR's might. Let us strengthen this unity under the leadership of the working class!"

On the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution the Soviet government issued a decree on the introduction in the country of a 7-hour working day. Thus the USSR surpassed the traditional May Day demand of an 8-hour working day, a goal that had still not been achieved by the working people in a large part of the capitalist world. The new slogan read: "Long live the 7-hour working day, an achievement of the October Revolution!"

After being reconstructed, Lenin's Mausoleum in Red Square was made into a stand from which the leaders of the party and the government, army commanders and foreign guests could greet the demonstrators. The celebration became an even bigger event once May 2 was also declared an official holiday.

In subsequent years new slogans were used for May Day celebrations, such as "For industrialization, for the development and collectivization of agriculture!", "Industrialization is the basis of the country's defence!" and "Let us fulfill the five-year plan in four years!"

The slogans... How did people back then and later perceive those slogans on the power of the workers, on the unity between the working class and the peasants, on collectivization of the agriculture and the early fulfillment of the five-year plans? Of course, there are not so many people still around from those years who can recollect their impressions, and in any case they would give different accounts. Some were simply unable to comprehend the real social processes behind those slogans, yet there were others who realized that gradually, from the 1920s and the early 1930s on, the power of the working people was increasingly being displaced by the dictatorship of the new bureaucracy and Stalin's personal absolute power.

Some people were deceived, but most were afraid to look for the truth about the "depeasantization" of the farmers during their all-out collectivization, about the price of industrialization and about the true meaning of the endless trials of the "enemies of the people". The exposure of true enemies of Soviet power passed unnoticed among the countless innocent victims of Stalin's regime. The slogans carried by the participants in various demonstrations, including, unfortunately, those held on May Day, contained words of praise for the repressive state apparatus and called for a more energetic fight against "forces alien to the people".

Partial realization of what was going on came later, in the early stages of the war with Germany. The country, which had been weakened by mass-scale repressions against political and economic leaders, and army generals and officers, as well as by a number of serious foreign-policy mistakes on Stalin's part, was sadly opening its eyes to the true state of affairs.

The threat presented to the USSR by the German Reich had been perceived long before the Nazi invasion. The USSR

was staunchly opposed to fascism and had sent volunteers to help the Spanish patriots fighting against the fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Slogans carried at May Day and other demonstrations denounced fascism. Meanwhile, the fascist threat was growing.

After Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939, the USSR's chances of avoiding a war with Nazi Germany steadily diminished.

On May Day of 1939 the Executive Committee of the Communist International urged the workers of all countries to recall that 50 years before May 1 had been proclaimed a day of workers' international solidarity. It was suggested that a world conference of workers' organizations be convened in order to defend peace by launching a resolute struggle against the fascist aggressors.

In spite of differences in local conditions, the real opportunities and the immediate tasks facing the world's countries, both in the USSR and nations in which the working people were waging a difficult struggle against the oppressors and aggressors who were trying to drag humanity into a bloody war, May Day continued to retain some common features as a holiday of labour and peace.

SOLIDARITY:

May Day Bathed in Blood

In 1918 May Day celebrations took place in a complicated international situation. Right before the holiday the workers of Finland had had to give up their struggle, which had lasted for three months. Initially successful, the revolution in Finland was ruthlessly suppressed with the help of German intervention. Meanwhile, in Germany itself anti-war sentiments were growing among all strata of the population.

In France the trade-union leaders suggested holding union meetings instead of a May Day demonstration. Once again the holiday of labour and class struggle was being sacrificed in the interest of "national defence". Nevertheless, work stoppages took place at many enterprises in Paris, Le Havre, Marseille, Lyon and other cities. Soldiers sent by the government to suppress the strikes fraternized with the workers and were called back. In Italy demonstrations were outlawed. In all countries, except Austria-Hungary, where anti-war activities had never stopped, demonstrations were held only on a small scale.

The First World War ended on November 11, 1918, with the Compiègne armistice. Monarchies had been overthrown, workers' and soldiers' Soviets were appearing everywhere and claiming power. However, the bourgeoisie, acting together with the Social-Democratic leaders, managed to slow the development of the revolutions, imposing on them limited bourgeois democratic tasks. In the beginning of 1919 the revolutionary vanguard in Germany was provoked into premature action, which was ruthlessly suppressed, and its top leaders, such as Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches, were executed. On May Day of 1919, following bloody battles which had taken place that same spring, the German proletariat was still fighting for revolutionary power under communist leadership only in Munich, the capital of Bavaria. But Lenin's May Day greetings to the Bavarian Communists did not reach them, for the counter-revolutionary troops entered the city and began a massacre on that same day.

In Hungary, on the other hand, which was proclaimed a Soviet republic on March 21, 1919, May Day was marked freely and festively. Preceding the celebration was the country's first free election to Soviets of Working People's Deputies. The 8-hour working day had been introduced, wages were raised and many workers' families had moved into the houses of the rich. Even though a French-instigated invasion by Romanian and Czech troops had set up new government in parts of Hungary, the workers were nonetheless allowed to hold May Day celebrations.

"Dear Comrades," Jenő Landler, one of the leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, said at a meeting in Budapest, "at this great Red May the Hungarian proletariat must have faith and courage... for then our cause will not be lost and we'll save the power of the proletariat in Hungary." The next day a meeting of the Budapest Central Revolutionary Soviet passed a decision on the general mobilization of Communists and workers to defend the capital and Soviet Hungary. The enemy was repelled, and the Hungarian Soviet republic won three more months of its heroic existence.

In March 1919 a congress held in Moscow founded the Communist International (the Third International). Its manifesto *To the Proletarians of the Whole World* stressed its consistency with the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, as well as with the First and Second Internationals. While the First International anticipated future development and outlined its prospects, and the Second International brought together and organized millions of the proletariat, the Third International became an International of overt mass action.

People in many countries responded to the call of the Communist International addressed to the workers of all countries to make their governments give up the direct and indirect intervention against Soviet Russia. The mass movement "Hands off Soviet Russia and Soviet Hungary!" started developing. In Germany the committee of the revolutionary workers of Braunschweig demanded that all military actions be stopped immediately, and urged soldiers to disobey military orders and workers to refuse to transport war cargoes. The committee called on German, French, British and US workers not to allow the Russian revolution to be drowned in blood. The Central Committee of the German Communist Party proposed to German workers that May Day be marked with manifestations of solidarity with their Russian and

Hungarian brothers, who were then in the forefront of the revolutionary struggle. French Socialists called upon the workers and soldiers of France to save the revolutions in Russia and Hungary, pointing out that their own hopes for liberty were at stake.

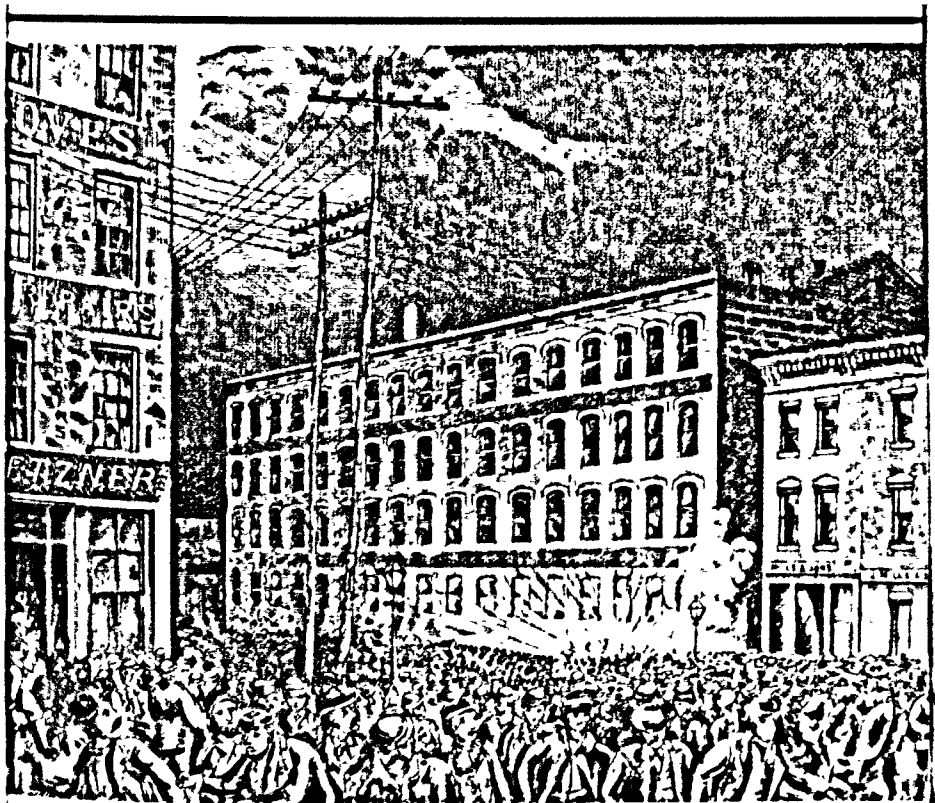
In April 1919 the sailors of the French fleet anchored near Odessa and Sevastopol raised red flags on their ships and demanded that the intervention be stopped and they be sent home.

On the eve of May Day 1920 the West European Bureau of the Communist International addressed all workers' organizations with an appeal to mark the holiday with a general strike. Only a few Socialist parties in Europe responded. Strikes were held in London and Paris. In Spain, workers demonstrated by marching along the streets of Madrid. Demonstrations were staged in Prague and Vienna by Social-Democrats. In the United States May Day was celebrated in New York, Boston and Cleveland.

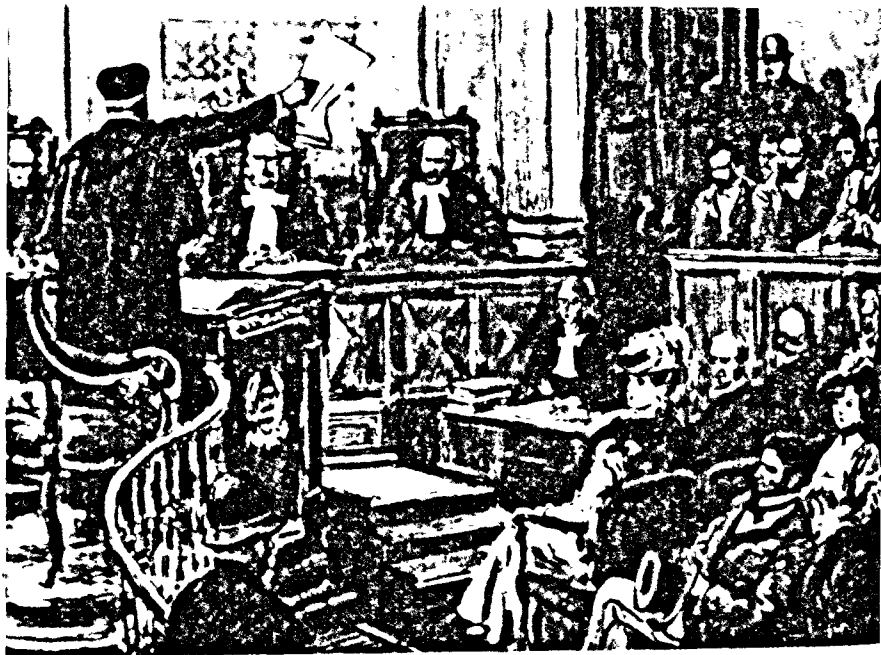
There were large-scale strikes in Berlin, Hamburg and other German cities, but the Communists and Social-Democrats held separate May Day meetings. The main slogans employed by the Communists were "Hands off Soviet Russia!", "Hands off the German revolution!" and "Towards close economic and political ties with Soviet Russia!"

Now it was Asia's turn to experience social upheavals as well. The upsurge of national-liberation movements in Asia which followed the October Revolution, the numerical growth and increased level of class consciousness of the proletariat there meant that several Asian countries joined the international celebration of May Day. In Indonesia this happened for the first time in 1918. In China the first Chinese translation of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* was published and a Marxist club was opened in Shanghai on the eve of the May Day in 1920. The first May Day celebrations were held in Peking, Shanghai and Guangzhou. That same year the first May Day demonstration in Japan was held in Tokyo. May Day was also celebrated in 1920 by the workers of Osaka, Kobe and Yokogama.

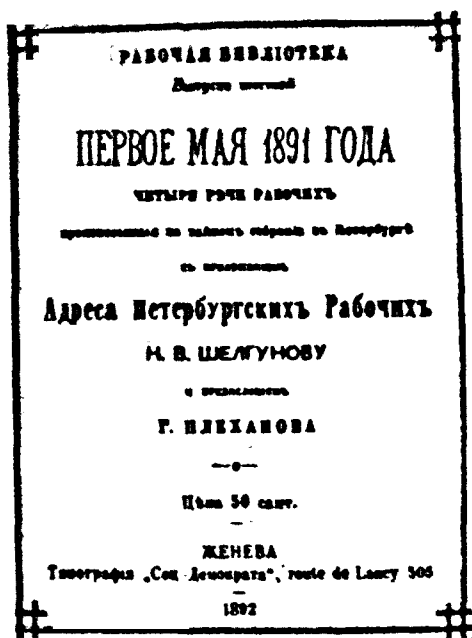
In the summer of 1921 the Third Congress of the Communist International held under Lenin's leadership, which noted the growth and closer unity of the Communist parties of different countries, pointed out the need, given the fact that the revolutionary tide was receding, to win over the majority of the proletariat and other workers and put forward



Chicago, May 4, 1886. Police open fire on the demonstration of workers.



*The trial of the
"Chicago martyrs"
(1886).*



*The cover of the
brochure May Day of
1891 published in
Geneva by a Marxist
group called the
Emancipation of Labour
Group.*



A May Day demonstration in London's Hyde Park, 1892. Fourth from the left on the stand is Frederick Engels.

A demonstration in Sofia, Bulgaria, 1905.





Russia between the two revolutions—February and October 1917: a May Day demonstration.

Czechoslovakia. May Day in Prague, 1918.

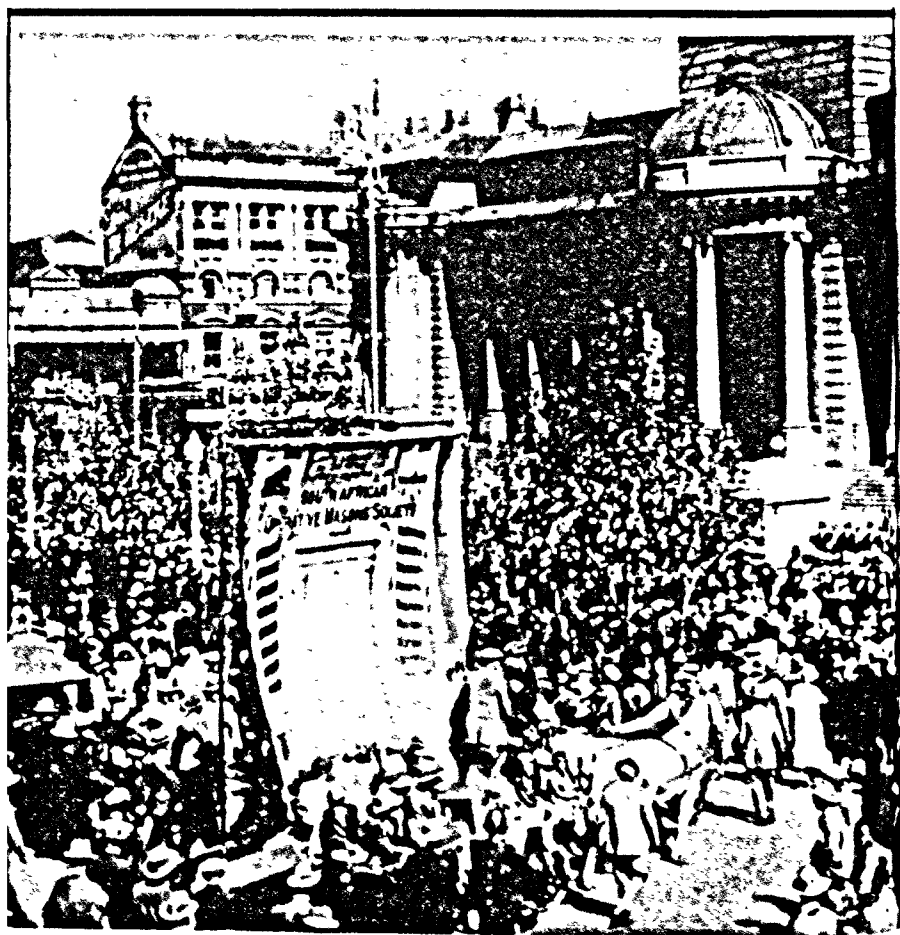




The first years after the revolution. Moscow, May 1, 1925.

France, 1926. Demonstrators being arrested.



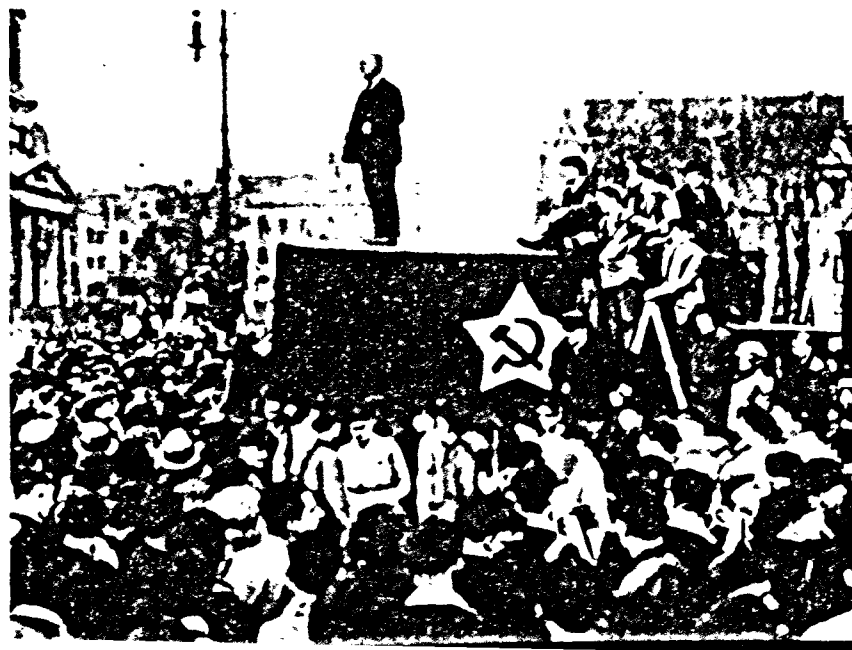


A May Day celebration in Johannesburg, 1928.



A May Day demonstration in New York, expressing solidarity with the working class of the USSR, 1930.

Ernst Thälmann on May 1, 1931.

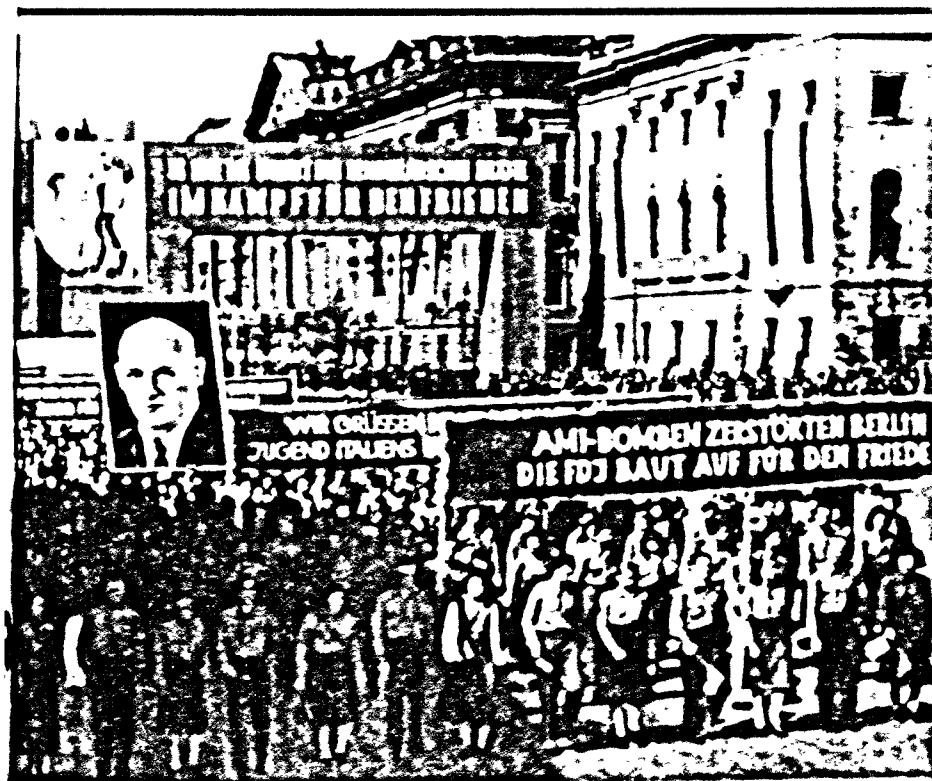




In the 1920s and 1930s foreign workers and engineers were employed at Soviet enterprises. A May Day demonstration of internationalist workers.

"Fascism Means War" was the slogan of a peace demonstration in London on May 1, 1934.





The GDR, 1950. A May Day demonstration in Berlin.



Japan in the 1970s. Striking seamen on the streets of Tokyo.

May Day demonstrations in London are traditionally held in Hyde Park.

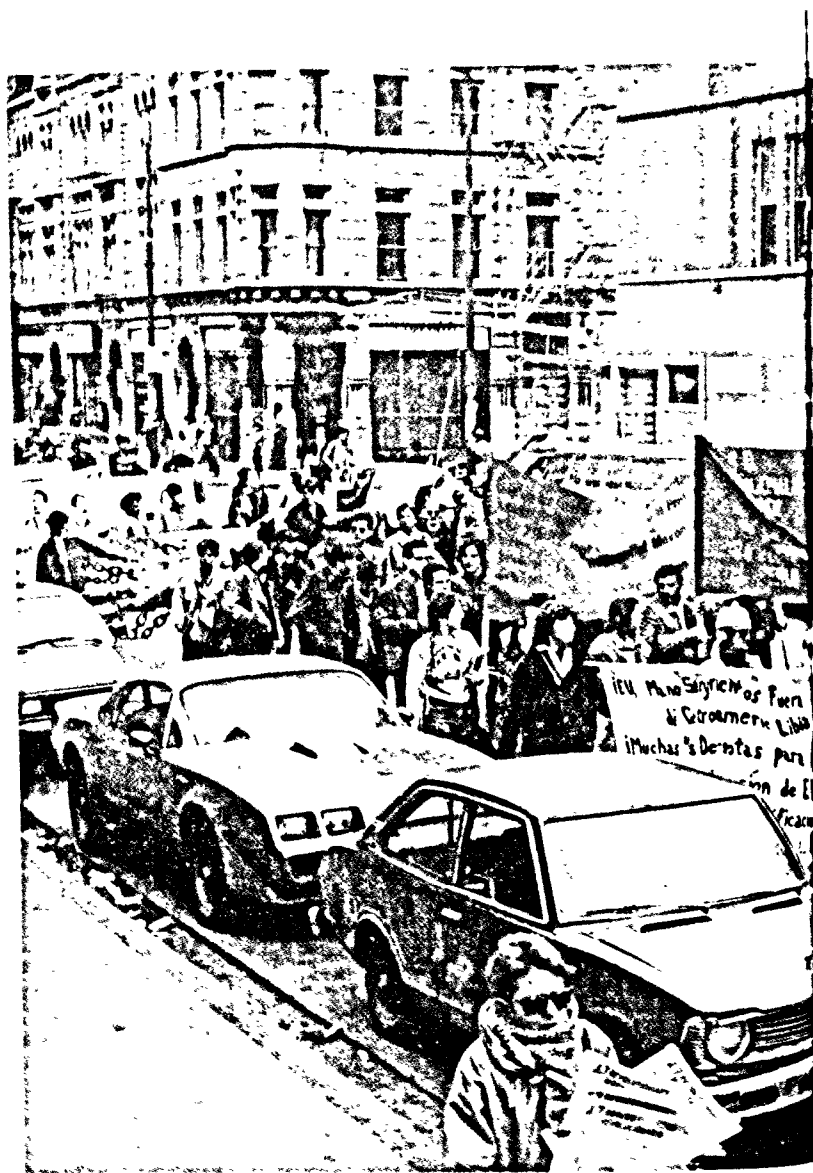




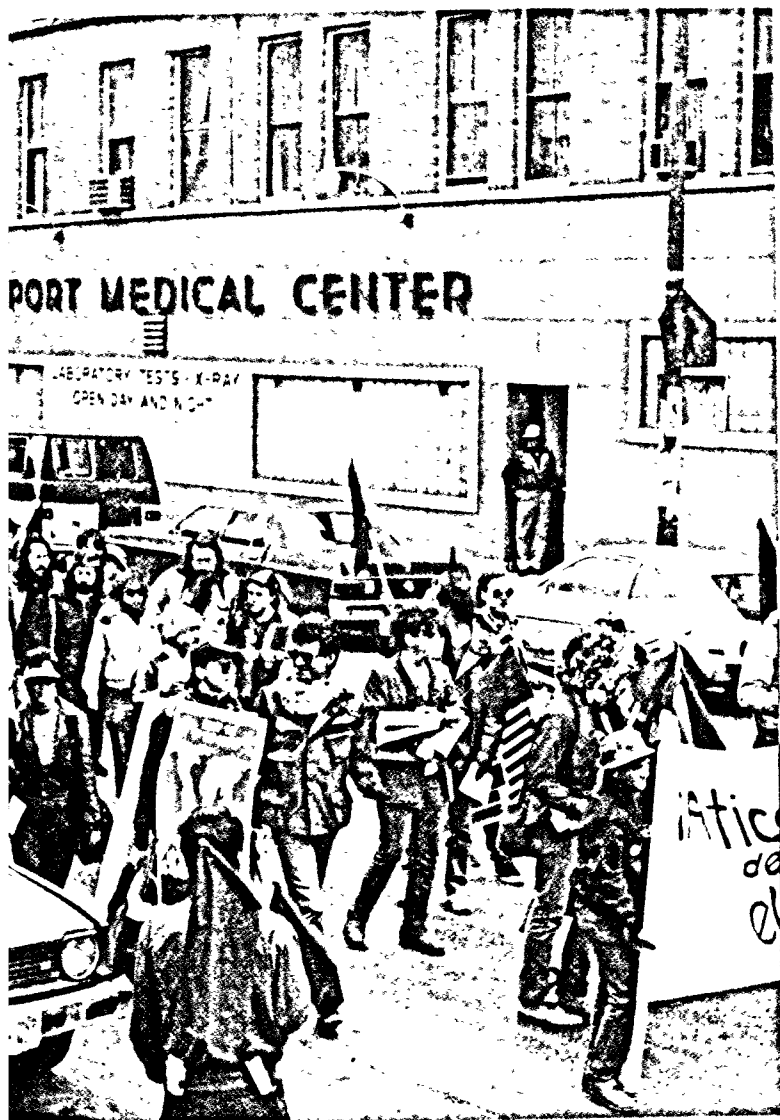
France. These French women are marching for jobs, 1987.

The USSR. May Day of 1988.





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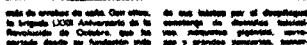


Chicago. A march marking the May Day centennial.

Financiero **MAYO** **MULTITUDINARIO, SOLIDO Y**
DECIDIDO ABRAZO AL SOCIALISMO

Algorithme Boolei contre encodage la de Gabor

Como parte de las tareas más productivas del país, marcharon algunas de las marchistas voluntarias del contingente Primero de Mayo de la CTC de Ciudad de La Habana, que esta año volverá a sufragar labores al llegar que volverá una hermosa cartolina un millón



de sus hijos por el desarrollo constante de diversas habilidades, algunas físicas, otras mentales y otras emocionales, como:



Philippe Herzog, hier soir, à L'heure de vérité

L'EUROPE MELEZ-VOUS-EN

Le dirigeant communiste, élu de liste aux élections du 10 juin, a dénoncé les saqueurs pour les travailleurs qui entraînent la détresse de la finance sur l'Europe. Il a proposé un autre projet associant des nations souveraines et construit sur le rassemblement des peuples.

(Page 8, le compte rendu de l'émission, et l'édition de Roland Leroy sur le congrès des communistes.)



The GUARDIAN

SOCIALIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

MAY 5, 1989

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THE WORKERS WEEKLY

Stars and Stripes flying over Australia

Pine Gap and Nurrungar upgraded

The Stars and Stripes are flying over Pine Gap near Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The US has agreed to upgrade the Pine Gap and Nurrungar satellite radio relay stations.

Over 50 years earlier, personnel at Pine Gap were sent to build a large US Navy transport plane. It included a large satellite relay station. The Pine Gap — just days after the American attack on the CIA base in Iran — was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

The American public had no voice in the development of US military facilities in Australia. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

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satellite. Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

An article has been developed. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

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operation of a new system at the US base at Nurrungar. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

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with the US at Pine Gap and Nurrungar. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

The US has agreed to upgrade the Pine Gap and Nurrungar satellite radio relay stations.

The Labor Government has agreed to upgrade the Pine Gap and Nurrungar satellite radio relay stations.

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any public discussion. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

A report of meeting between the US base in Australia. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

The new capability provided by the US base in Australia. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

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The new capability provided by the US base in Australia. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

May Day celebrations



May Day celebrations took place in South Australia and Queensland last weekend and Monday.

In Brisbane, more than 1,000 people took part in the May Day celebrations. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

The main focus of this year's celebrations was the new Labor legislation. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

A demonstration by the SP and SWP after the worst legislation. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

A team in May Day was moved by Minister. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

South Australia's celebration took place in Adelaide. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

A team from members of the community. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

June 1st, after the celebration, was the Labor Day. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Colwell, a South Queensland and meeting. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Over 100 people attended with the day. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

spoke of changes in the new system. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

In South Australia, more than 100 people took part. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

The only the following was attended. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

After the march, about 100 people gathered. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.

Minister's response will be to the US. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station. It was a satellite relay station.



Left and Above: Labor Day March in South Australia.

May Day Celebrations

Melbourne — May 5, 10 am, May Day march, starting from the Victoria Trades Council May 5, 10 am, Pine Gap and Nurrungar, ABRU, 120 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

Newcastle — May 5, 10 am, May Day march, starting from the Newcastle Trades Council May 5, 10 am, Pine Gap and Nurrungar, ABRU, 120 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

Sydney — May 5, 10 am, May Day march, starting from the Sydney Trades Council May 5, 10 am, Pine Gap and Nurrungar, ABRU, 120 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

Wollongong — May 5, 10 am, May Day march, starting from the Wollongong Trades Council May 5, 10 am, Pine Gap and Nurrungar, ABRU, 120 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

Fremantle — May 5, 10 am, May Day march, starting from the Fremantle Trades Council May 5, 10 am, Pine Gap and Nurrungar, ABRU, 120 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne.

INSIDE: Outrage over murder by police p.5
Folind p.7

May Day in the press.



Foreign guests are traditionally invited to the May Day celebrations in Moscow. Pictured is a guest delegation in Red Square.



A May Day poster. London, 1894.



International May Day, 1917.

SOCIAL EVENING,

MASONIC HALL, JEPPE STREET,

JOHANNESBURG.

Chairman. ANDREW WATSON.



A May Day poster of Italian Socialists.

◀ *A May Day poster. Johannesburg, 1917.*



A May Day poster. India, 1931.



l'Humanité

ORGANE CENTRAL DU PARTI COMMUNISTE (S.F.C.)

Front Populaire

'Stop the war, stop fascism'—a poster of the Popular Front, 1935.



A May Day poster of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, 1946.

IK WERK VOOR CHILI



1 MEI AKTIE

EVERT VERMEER STICHTING
PVDA-AFDELINGEN
CHILI-KOMMITEE
WERELDWINKELS SJALOOM
WERKTEATER NIVON

A May Day poster expressing solidarity with the Chilean people in their struggle against Pinochet. Netherlands, 1975.



A May Day poster of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, 1985.

the slogan "Go among the masses!" By the beginning of 1922 the tactics of the common revolutionary front had been defined. In the face of the capitalist offensive against the achievements of the working class and the growing fascist threat, it became imperative to open talks between the Socialist and Communist Internationals on joint action by different groups of the working class. It was agreed that May Day demonstrations of 1922 would be held under the common slogans of the struggle for an 8-hour working day, against unemployment, for the setting up of a joint proletarian front, and resumption of political and economic relations of the capitalist states with Soviet Russia.

Joint demonstrations of Communists and Socialists were held under the same slogans in Austria, Germany, Sweden and Norway. Separate trade-union and Social-Democratic rallies were held in only a few cities in Germany (Hamburg and Köln). In England May Day demonstrations were held on Saturday May 1 and the next day and were joined by the leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC General Council. Funds were raised to help the starving people in Russia. At the rallies resolutions were passed on combatting unemployment and on an immediate recognition of Soviet Russia. At May Day demonstrations in the United States workers demanded that "prisoners of the class war" be granted amnesty and that the death sentence given to Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, workers of Italian background falsely charged with murder, be withdrawn.

Although no general demonstrations or meetings were held in France, there were militant strikes and rallies staged in various cities. Striking workers gathered in the suburbs of Paris wearing traditional dog-rose flowers in their button-holes, sometimes together with springs of lily of the valley. In Hungary, which was under the rule of Admiral Horthy, many workers went on strike even though May Day demonstrations had been banned.

Thousands of meetings were held on the eve of May Day in Bulgaria. Leaflets and appeals were spread all over the country. Production was suspended throughout and big demonstrations and public rallies were held, at which the participants expressed fraternal solidarity with the workers and peasants of Soviet Russia.

In order to take the steam out of a strike, the Italian government announced May 1 as a day off in advance, but outlawed all marches and demonstrations. Troops were

brought into big cities. The workers held rallies under the slogans of a united front and recognition of Soviet Russia. In a number of cities the fascists, who were gaining strength, attacked the workers and, supported by the troops and the police, beat up the demonstrators. The workers refused to be provoked and protested against the violation of the rights of the proletarian organizations.

Less than six months later the Italian fascists, taking advantage of the split in the working class and the weakness of the Liberal government, seized power. The establishment of a fascist dictatorship in Italy, the growing activeness of the fascist organizations in Germany, especially in Bavaria, presented new problems for the international workers' movement. Inter-imperialist contradictions were also getting sharper: the possibility of a conflict between France and Germany was imminent, made even more so by the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr area. The joint action of the Communists of France, Germany and other countries was opposed by the growing activity of the reactionary nationalist and fascist unions. The Social-Democratic Internationals (the Second, Vienna, and the Amsterdam Trade-Union Internationals) failed to coordinate their activities due to national contradictions. On the eve of May Day the Communist organizations in various countries that comprised the International Action Committee were warning of the dangers of war and fascism.

Viewing the development of a united proletarian front as the major prerequisite for success, the Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International recommended to Communist parties that the May Day demonstrations of 1923 be primarily directed against the fascist threat. In Italy the Mussolini government banned all public actions and declared April 21 as "the national day of labour". But despite persecutions and the fact that workers' newspapers were being burned, 80 per cent of the workers in the metallurgical and construction industries and 60 per cent of printing-house workers went on strike on May 1 in Milan. The workers in Turin hoisted a red flag on top of the city's tallest tower where it waved for four hours. Clashes between demonstrators and police took place in Calabria and Sicily.

For the first time a demonstration of printers and a public rally were held in Teheran. The students and workers of Peking also marked May Day by passing out leaflets and with the holding of public rallies demanding their rights to

hold meetings and strikes, an 8-hour working day, the restoration of the trade unions and the release of arrested railway workers.

Given the fact that the revolutionary movement lost some of its momentum as a result of the partial stabilization of capitalism, the May Day demonstrations in a number of European countries became smaller. In 1925 the biggest May Day festival in the history of Australia was held in Melbourne. The parade following behind a red flag and including seven bands marched across the city. Workers' rallies and big meetings were also held. May Day was celebrated for the first time in Korea despite the government ban on meetings and demonstrations. In China a national congress in Guangzhou called on the international workers' movement to unite in the struggle against imperialism.

Britain was the centre of the 1926 May Day celebrations, with the holiday being observed in virtually the entire country. A group of Labour MPs issued an appeal calling for the unity of nations. The demonstrations were especially big in the mining regions. The miners' union decided to hold a general strike in response to a massive lock-out by the mine owners, a decision supported by the Congress of the Trade Unions. In Barrow the demonstrators carried a poster portraying a mine owner sitting comfortably in his chair and smoking his cigar while underneath a miner was slaving away in the dim light of his helmet lamp.

In the first days of May a broad movement in support of the English miners began throughout the world. Railway workers refused to transport coal, and dockers would not unload English ships or load coal. Fund-raising campaigns were held everywhere to collect money for the miners. The working people of the USSR contributed a lot of money to the English miners. The miners continued their struggle until the end of November, but were then forced to stop the strike.

In 1927 May Day was legally observed by the workers of Austria and Czechoslovakia, while in Italy and Hungary demonstrations were held in spite of bans. In Hankow some 200,000 and in Shanghai 100,000 workers demonstrated in support of the Chinese revolution.

In subsequent years, international solidarity was expressed in the form of protests against the imperialist intervention in China. The struggle against the growing danger of imperialist wars and the increasing fascist threat in Germany and Austria was gaining strength. May Day actions swept such Latin

American countries as Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay. In Mexico a workers' parade was held. Independent trade unions there demonstrated under the slogan of solidarity with General César Augusto Sandino, the hero of the national-liberation struggle in Nicaragua.

In the period leading up to May Day in 1929 the Communists in Germany were urging the people to protest against the military preparations. The right-wing Social-Democratic leaders were opposed to holding a joint demonstration with the Communists. In Berlin demonstrations were prohibited, but the workers of Berlin's biggest enterprises, having set up a May Day Committee, persisted with their activities.

The police opened fire on a peace march of 200,000 workers in Berlin, killing 31 people and injuring hundreds more. The workers started setting up barricades, and only the earnest efforts of the leadership of the German Communist Party convinced them of the necessity to retreat. The police arrested 1,200 people, shut down the communist newspaper *Rote Fahne* and banned the Union of Red Frontline Soldiers. A public commission which was formed to investigate the incident, quickly established that it was the authorities and not the Communists who were to blame for what had happened. This "bloody May Day" cooled off the relations between the Communists and the Social-Democrats for a long time, thus undermining the much needed unity of the workers' parties in the face of the growing fascist threat in Germany.

Protests against the shooting of the Berlin workers by the police were heard from many countries. The workers of New York, the Communists of France, the revolutionary workers of Belgium, Great Britain and Czechoslovakia—all expressed their indignation. Meetings of protests were held in many cities of the USSR and funds were raised at many enterprises for the victims of the massacre.

May Day celebrations became more militant during the world economic crisis (1929-1933), which had caused mass unemployment and aggravated social conflicts even more. In many countries these celebrations involved clashes between the workers and the police. Police opened fire at demonstrators in Marseille and Philadelphia, and attacked workers in Dundee, England. Mounted police were used to break up a demonstration in Nice. Preventive arrests were made in Japan, where police units escorted the demonstration col-

umns. In Madrid meetings were dispersed with the help of mounted police and armoured cars. Clashes also took place in Hungary, Greece, Palestine, Poland and Romania. Police attacked the workers in Mexico and Cuba, where May Day demonstrations had not previously been outlawed. May Day was marked for the first time in Vietnam in 1930.

In January 1933 the darkness of the fascist dictatorship spread over Germany. Having crushed the Communist Party and sent many Social-Democrats into camps, the Nazis decided to destroy the spirit of class consciousness and internationalism in workers, brought up by generations of fighters for social liberation. A decree of the Nazi government declared May 1 "the holiday of national labour" and "a German public holiday". The holiday was marked with great pomp, by a big rally in Lustgarten and a military parade attended by 200,000 people in the Tempelhof airfield. Even though the trade-union association led by the Social-Democrats urged the workers to agree to this falsification of the proletarian holiday, the Nazis seized all the offices of the Social-Democrats, confiscated all of the party's property and arrested its leaders the day after the holiday. In another week the trade unions were replaced by a fascist "labour front" in which the workers were forced to unite with the capitalists.

Still, in 1933 and the years after that May Day for many continued to be a day of workers' solidarity, a holiday when workers still tried to find some way to demonstrate their loyalty to the revolutionary traditions and their internationalist duty. Illegal leaflets were written, printed and distributed in very dangerous conditions, red flags were put up on factory smokestacks, and political slogans were written on walls. All these things were done by people who realized that this might cost them their lives. Gradually and with difficulty, the mistrust between the Communists and the Social-Democrats was being overcome.

The 1934 May Day celebration in France followed an attempted fascist coup and a general strike on February 12 in which five million workers took part. The French capital was filled with troops and there were clashes with workers. Not long after that Maurice Thorez met Georgi Dimitrov, who after the famous Leipzig trial became one of the leaders of the executive committee of the Communist International. Thorez and Dimitrov agreed that the wall separating the Communist and Social-Democratic workers had to be destroyed and that

this required new approaches to the united front policy. The Communist parties of other countries shared this conclusion.

The turn in the policy of the Communist International was made at its 7th Congress, which was held in July-August 1935. The experience of a number of Communist parties suggested strategic conclusions on the need to struggle for a united proletarian and broad anti-fascist front, as well as for a united anti-imperialist front in the colonies and other dependent countries and a serious increase in the fight to counteract the threat of an imperialist war.

May Day in 1936 was held in many countries after the recent electoral victory of the Popular Front in Spain and at the height of the parliamentary elections in France. In those countries trade-union unity ensured that workers' participation in May Day strikes, demonstrations and rallies would be on a mass scale. The election of the Popular Front in Spain enabled it to form a government there.

Certain improvements also took place in other countries. The demonstrations and rallies held in Britain and the United States were more popular than they had been for years. Slogans concerning the unity of workers' organizations could often be seen and heard. In Poland, the street marches were joined by the peasants and intellectuals. Impressive demonstrations and rallies were held in Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Switzerland, Greece and other countries.

In 1937 the international solidarity of the workers and other democratic forces was directed towards support for the national-liberation revolutionary war being fought by the Spanish people against General Franco's armed rebellion, which began in the summer of 1936 and which had direct support from Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Volunteers went to Spain from many countries, such as the USSR, Germany, Italy, France, Britain, Austria and the United States. Fighting side by side with the Spanish patriots, the international brigades defeated General Franco's and Italian divisions at Madrid, Jaram and Guadalajara. A conference in Paris held before May Day of 1937 by the Communists of many European countries and the United States adopted an appeal to the peoples of the world urging them to struggle against the fascist coup in Spain. The appeal called on workers to make the international May Day holiday a demonstration of support for Republican Spain. It also proposed using the holiday to raise money for Spain and to demand the end of the blockade there as well as to organize

the shipment of medicines. Despite the war, mass demonstrations were held in all the major Spanish cities under the slogans of struggle against the fascists. The demonstrations were joined by the soldiers of the popular army, which was then being formed.

Unlike the previous year, the celebration of May Day in 1938 in France was not militant, because that country's Popular Front had fallen apart.

The year 1939 marked the 50th anniversary of the first May Day. However, there was not much to celebrate. It was the last May Day celebration before the Second World War, the imminence of which had already created a heavy atmosphere on the continent. Germany had annexed Austria, Franco's dictatorship was established in Spain, and Czechoslovakia had been occupied by the Nazis. In France the repressions were so harsh that the World Confederation of Labour did not call for a strike for the first time. Following the example of Nazi Germany, the "Day of Labour" was celebrated in Bulgaria. International proletarian solidarity was being called into question.

THE POTENTIAL OF COMMON SENSE:

The War and the Victory over Fascism

Just as the First World War had done, the Second World War put the ideas of proletarian internationalism to a serious test. This time, however, the international working class had a definite enemy: not imperialism in general, but its most aggressive creations, German and Italian fascism and Japanese militarism. In June 1941 the war against fascism was joined by the Soviet Union. The anti-fascist struggle united people of different nations and races, different religious denominations and political views. The leading role in the war of the nations against fascism belonged to the working class.

During the war no May Day demonstrations were held in the Soviet Union, in the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition or in the countries occupied by the fascists. This does not mean that the ideas and spirit of May Day were forgotten, just that the forms of their expression changed.

In the USSR May Day of 1942 was a difficult one. The holiday was marked on the fronts during breaks between heavy fighting. In the rear the workers and peasants worked twice or even three times as hard on May Day, which before the war had been a day off.

May Day of 1943 came after the victorious battle of Stalingrad—the turning point of the war. The soldiers of the Red Army and the people realized that they still had a hard struggle ahead of them and that all forces had to be mobilized. The patriotic movement in the country manifested itself not only in the selfless labour of the people, but also in their raising money for the Red Army. The next year May Day took place at a time when the army's operations had taken on an even larger scale and when 3/4 of the occupied territory of the country had been liberated. That evening, for the first time during the war, the holiday was commemorated by a gun

salute in Moscow, Leningrad, Gomel, Kiev, Kharkov, Rostov, Tbilisi, Simferopol and Odessa.

The Second World War was vivid proof of the internationalist spirit of the Soviet people, who established closer ties with anti-fascists abroad. The army of the Wojsko Polskie, the Czech Corps and the French air regiment, Normandie-Niemen, fought side by side with Soviet troops. Upon reaching the state border of the USSR the Red Army began its liberating mission in Europe.

May Day was observed during the war in Western Europe as well. In 1942 hundreds of thousands of English workers sent May Day greetings to their Soviet counterparts. On May 1 an international miners' conference was convened in London. It urged the miners to step up the struggle against the common enemy. In the countries occupied by the fascists, in the satellite states of Nazi Germany and in Germany itself the Resistance movement was gaining momentum. Various publications, especially communist ones, were put out underground for May Day. Following the example of the Nazis, Marshal Petain, the head of the Vichy regime in France, declared May 1 the holiday of "class peace".

On May Day of 1943 leaflets were disseminated in Nazi Germany saying that Hitler had lost the war and urging the people to unite with the anti-fascist forces in order to overthrow his regime.

In Italy Luigi Longo, the former general commissar of the international brigades in Spain, explained that worker-peasant unity was essential for a successful uprising: "We must do more, much more. We must create a broad military organization in the rural areas..."

On May 1 in Bulgaria the general headquarters of the national-liberation guerilla army thanked the commanders and soldiers of the "Khristo Botev" battalion for valiantly doing their soldier's duty and for the heroism they had shown in fighting the enemy. The battalion was proclaimed the first shock battalion of the People's Army.

In Romania, where the authorities had stepped up the repressions directed against sabotage and defeatism, prominent scholars addressed a demand to Ion Antonescu, the head of government, that he stop Romania's participation in the war without delay. In Iasi, Braşov, Ploesti and other cities Communists held anti-government demonstrations, and the acts of sabotage against railways, highways and places where German troops were stationed increased. Shortly before May

Day the Communists and Social-Democrats reached agreement on forming a United Workers' Front. Their joint manifesto urged all Romanians to become the masters of their own fate and to struggle for an immediate peace, to overthrow the Antonescu government, to form a national government of representatives of all the anti-Antonescu forces, to drive the Nazi armies out of the country, and to support the Red Army.

In the USSR May Day of 1945 was marked by fireworks in Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad, Sevastopol, Odessa and the capitals of all the Union Republics.

By that time the peoples of many European countries had been liberated from the Nazis. Once liberated, they no longer had forces which would dare to interfere with the working people openly and freely celebrating the international holiday of peace and labour. The holiday, which for a number of years could not be celebrated in any public way, was revived. In many cities groups of emaciated men and women wearing the striped pajamas of the Nazi concentration camps, people who had miraculously escaped death, marched among the demonstrators. Demonstrations were held in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania, Austria, Hungary, Italy, France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and in the Scandinavian countries.

On the night of May 1 a Red banner was mounted on top of the Reichstag in Berlin. The battle for the city was nearing an end with the exception of the remains of a garrison that was continuing to put up fierce resistance. The same day a national-liberation uprising of the Czech people began, and the Soviet Army quickly hurried to give it assistance. On the night of May 9, 1945, Nazi Germany signed an act of the unconditional surrender in Karlshorst. The surrender of Japan, its ally, followed a few months later.

The defeat of German fascism and Japanese militarism was a historic event, a demonstration of what could be achieved by a united effort of the progressive forces of the world.

In 1946, after a lengthy break, the traditional military parade and mass demonstration of working people were held in Red Square in Moscow. The events were attended by guests from all over the country and from abroad. Demonstrations and popular festivals were held in all cities and villages.

May Day was solemnly yet festively marked in the coun-

tries of Eastern Europe where national-democratic revolutions at the end of the war had opened the way for the profound social changes.

In Berlin, which was controlled by the army authorities of the USSR, the United States, Britain and France, a huge May Day demonstration was held for the first time in thirteen years. A week before the holiday the Communist Party and the Social-Democratic Party of Germany decided at a Congress to join together and form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany.

An important role in the international workers' movement in the postwar years was played by the formation in October 1945 of the World Federation of Trade Unions at a Congress held in Paris. For the first time ever the biggest trade unions of the world (with the exception of the American Federation of Labour), including those of the USSR, Eastern European countries, and a number of colonial and dependent countries, were united in one organization. The World Federation of Trade Unions became the coordinator of many international actions, including the celebration of May Day. The Women's International Democratic Federation and the World Federation of Democratic Youth, which also united dozens of millions of working people, were formed later that year in November.

In a number of European capitalist countries, primarily those having strong Communist parties, the workers achieved substantial gains as regards their long-standing demands. Despite the fact that real wages were lower than they were before the war, several industries had been nationalized, the role of the trade unions in production increased, social security expanded, and the length of the working week and the system of leaves written down in the law. The participation of Communists in the governments of a number of bourgeois countries promised that other democratic reforms would follow.

A May Day demonstration in Paris and its suburbs was attended by 1.5 million people. Mass demonstrations were also held in Italy, the Scandinavian countries, Austria, and Belgium. Hopes were high that there would be further successes for democracy and social progress.

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR:

Peace and Labour

When May Day was first born the number of countries where it was marked was few and the demands made were limited to specific priority goals, such as restrictions on the number of working hours and then the introduction of an 8-hour working day. Gradually other issues were included, among them the social protection of labour, the struggle against militarism and for peace and social progress. The qualitative and quantitative changes brought about on the world scene by the revolution of October 1917 in Russia along with the victory over fascism in the Second World War not only broadened the scope of celebration, but also resulted in a more profound understanding of the differences in local conditions and the tasks faced by the respective nations. At the same time, May Day remained a truly international holiday with deep roots common for all countries despite the variety of national patterns and regional traditions. Moreover, the fact that many problems were becoming of a global nature increased the need to put forward common demands.

In the first post-war years the Soviet Union was facing the task of restoring the tremendous damage that had been done to the national economy. It also was concerned with its further development, as well as with the fulfillment of the plans for the country's economic, social and cultural development. The May Day slogans, demonstrations and meetings reflected the annual results of those plans and called for the mobilization of forces for the solution of new tasks. The demonstrations in Moscow and other cities were so massive, that it was decided that they should be attended only by representatives of the working people. The military parade in Red Square was replaced with sports performances. The decorations, banners and floats at the demonstrations became more varied, though the springtime atmosphere and the international character of the celebration remained. Radio and TV made it possible to link up the celebrations in different cities and countries on the holiday.

May Day of 1961 also celebrated the opening of the space age. The whole world was thrilled by the achievement of Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space.

People everywhere were then watching the USSR with as much attention as they had during its struggle with fascism, and not only because of its achievements in space. Many people abroad knew that "the country of Lenin and Gagarin" was going through significant changes. The society had been reviewing its history since the 20th Congress of the CPSU, at which Nikita Khrushchev had analyzed the "Stalinist period of Soviet development", the person of Stalin himself, mentioned the horrible price of Stalinism and outlined major political and economic reforms.

Who could know then that the period which came to be known as the Khrushchev "thaw" would not last long and that soon the neostalinists would take advantage of Khrushchev's inconsistency and other weaknesses and gain the upper hand? This was what happened, and Leonid Brezhnev, a convenient choice who could easily be manipulated, was promoted to the country's number one position.

At the same time, some of the progress achieved during the "thaw" was irreversible and continued to be latently developed. Among the May Day demonstrators of Brezhnev's time (participating in celebrations that had a pompousness that was totally out of keeping with the state of affairs in the country) were those who would later become actively involved in the restructuring of the country's life, a process known to the world as perestroika.

In all the countries that had embarked on the socialist way of development, May Day was marked as a national holiday in the cities and villages, at enterprises and in schools. It became a tradition to hold the biggest demonstrations in the streets and squares of the capitals, such as Warsaw and Ulan Bator, Budapest and Pyongyang, Bucharest, Prague, etc. Military parades were often held as well.

At the May Day celebration in Berlin in 1950, which also marked the formation of the German Democratic Republic, some 200,000 people marched past the reviewing stand in Lustgarten, among them many sportsmen and members of the Union of Free German Youth dressed in blue shirts. That day the Labour Law came into force in the GDR, which secured the right to employment, equal rights for women and the active participation of trade unions in production. In the subsequent years May Day demonstrations in Berlin started

to be held along the festively decorated Karl Marx Alley where special stands had been erected.

In 1950 May Day was festively celebrated in Peking for the first time in the People's Republic of China. The demonstration was held in Tiananmen Square, where six months earlier the formation of the People's Republic of China was proclaimed, signalling the end of a protracted revolutionary war and the victory of the revolution. The same square was the site of a mass rally held on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the USSR and the People's Republic of China in Moscow in 1950. May Day started to be annually marked in the cities of China with mass demonstrations, fancy-dress parades and fireworks.

During the years of the Cold War the working people in the industrialized capitalist countries again had to rebuff a capitalist offensive. In France and Italy Communists were forced out of the government, and some trade unions, having left the World Federation of Trade Unions in 1949, formed the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and other trade-union associations. Often, like before the war, May Day celebrations were held separately by two or even three trade-union associations.

On May 1, 1947, a tragedy occurred in Italy. In the village of Piano dei Graci, Sicily, a peaceful demonstration was attacked by a mafia-linked gang, which fired on the crowd with machine guns, killing 11 and injuring 58. The next day the whole country responded to the call of the trade unions and went on a general strike defending the universal right to mark the holiday of the working people. A short time later, however, a split in the trade-union movement caused a definite decline in the activity of the masses. A demonstration in Naples in 1951 was dispersed by the police.

In France demonstrations were held only by the World Confederation of Labour. During the national-liberation struggle of the Algerian people the French police arrested people of North African background and broke up any of their demonstrations. Beginning in 1955 the authorities in Paris invariably prohibited May Day demonstrations.

In Japan mass May Day demonstrations gave rise to a movement called "the spring offensive". During the May Day demonstration of 1946 in Tokyo, which was then occupied by the US army, over half a million people came out in the streets, chanting "Give us rice!" and "Set up a democratic

government!" A total of two million demonstrators came out throughout the country. The May Day demonstrations in Tokyo held in front of the Emperor's palace were getting bigger and bigger every year. In 1952 the working people of Tokyo marched in the streets carrying the slogans: "We are against rearming!" and "Let's protect peace and national independence!" The US occupational authorities decided to change the march's route so that it would not pass the Emperor's palace. This caused an actual battle between the demonstrators and the police. Some people were killed and about 2,000 were injured.

The May Day demonstration in the United States was traditionally held in New York's Union Square. In 1947 the demonstration was attended by 100,000 people, but after that attendance dropped. May Day demonstrations were prohibited in 1958. In England Hyde Park remained the site of the May Day rallies.

In Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal May Day was banned. Nevertheless, 50,000 workers in Bilbao went on strike on May 1, 1947. All of them were fired, but hundreds of thousands of metallurgical industry workers in the Basque Provinces struck in solidarity. In April-May 1962 a major strike of the Asturias miners and the workers of the Basque Provinces, which was supported by other workers and eventually involved half a million people, developed into an angry protest against Franco's dictatorship.

In the conditions of the Cold War, the working people were waging a struggle along a number of interconnected directions: for the improvement of their living standard and in defence of democratic rights and freedoms; against colonial wars and the growing danger of nuclear war. The strike movement was gaining an unprecedentedly sharp, staunch and organized character and a variety of forms. Over the ten years from 1947 to 1956 some 100 million people went on strike in the six biggest capitalist countries alone.

The strike movement was the biggest in Italy, France, Australia, Japan and Finland. As a result of such struggle, the duration of the working week in Western Europe was reduced to around 43 hours and in the USA, to 40 hours, though many people were still working longer hours.

Millions of people have participated in the mass peace movement since the late 1940s. Campaigns to collect signatures on petitions in defence of peace, for the banning of nuclear weapons and against the imperialist aggression in

Korea and Vietnam became a means of mobilizing the masses and acquired an international character. For example, the 1950 Stockholm Appeal for the banning of nuclear weapons was signed by almost half a billion people. In the subsequent years 600 million people signed a petition calling on the great powers to conclude a peace treaty.

Starting in 1958, anti-nuclear marches in England would begin from the small village of Aldermaston and end in London. The 1963 Aldermaston march was joined by dozens of thousands of people from various countries. "Easter marches" started in West Germany. The movement of solidarity with Cuba, the victim of a US-imposed economic blockade, and with South Vietnam, which was involved in a protracted war with the United States, spread all over the world.

Thus as a result of the ever-growing scope of the socio-political and anti-war struggle of the working class in the developed capitalist countries, the celebration of May Day became more than just the manifestation of international working class solidarity.

On the eve of May Day in 1967 a conference of the European Communist and Workers' parties in Karlovy Vary put forward a programme of collective security for Europe. It also declared support for the liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people and protested against the reactionary military coup in Greece. These demands gave an even more pronounced political colouring to the May Day slogans and reflected the fact that the conflicts between labour and capital, which were especially acute in France, Italy, Argentina and Japan, were growing more intense everywhere. In the United States the assassination of Martin Luther King was followed by a wave of unrest among the poor Black population.

The "Red May" of 1968 in France, which was not directly connected with May Day, was provoked by the student unrest which started in Paris on May 3. No matter how these actions are regarded, it cannot be denied that they were a reflection of the accumulated explosive potential of the class struggle. Ten million people went on strike in France. In spite of the repressive Franco regime, strike activity in Spain increased and May Day actions were taken there. In Britain and the United States the scope of the strikes became wider, and in Japan over 11 million people joined the "spring offensive". The social background of the strikers was also getting wider throughout the world.

May Day celebrations were being held in more and more places every year. Even as early as in the 1950s, demonstrations in India, Indonesia, Ceylon and the Philippines were often attracting crowds of 300-500 thousand people. In 1960, which later became known as the "Year of Africa", 17 new states were formed on the African continent. The possibility for the people of African nations to freely and openly take part in the Day of Working People's International Solidarity was unquestionably an indication of the level of political independence and democracy they had achieved.

In the 1960s mass May Day celebrations were held in India, Egypt, Iraq, Mali, Tanzania, Cameroon, Senegal and Congo (Brazzaville), as well as in dozens of other countries. On May 2, 1968, a nationwide referendum was held in the United Arab Republic on the programme of democratic and social changes proposed by President Nasser.

May Day of 1970 became known as "Lenin's May Day" since shortly before the centennial of the birth of the leader of the Russian revolution was celebrated all over the world. The slogans of that May Day were calls to support the heroic people of Vietnam, to struggle against the threat of nuclear war and for peaceful coexistence and to liberate the planet from colonialism. There were also expressions of solidarity with the victims of terror in Greece, Indonesia and Haiti. "The struggle continues!" proclaimed the workers of France and Italy, the USA and Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries and Japan. The whole world was demanding, "Hands off Indochina!"

In the early 1970s, after a pause of several years, mass proletarian demonstrations, with Social-Democrats, Communists and trade-union activists marching together, were held in cities located on the Rhine in West Germany.

In the middle of the 1970s, there was a turning point in the international situation, a forerunner of detente. In 1975 the United States had to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam. May Day demonstrations in Hanoi had often had to be cancelled because of air raids. It was not until 1975, when May Day coincided with the liberation of South Vietnam, that the working people of Vietnam were able to mark the restoration of peace and the day of Working People's International Solidarity in Ho Chi Minh (formerly Saigon), Da Nang and Hue as well as in the North. The end of the war was also marked in many capitals of the world. When the news reached the Indian capital, people came out in

the streets in the workers' districts of Delhi, carrying red flags and posters. On May Day the central street of the old Delhi was decorated with bright-red flags and bunting. The columns of people moved from Ramlila Square to the historic Red Fort over which the tri-coloured flag of independent India was raised in August 1947 by Jawaharlal Nehru.

The fascist regimes in Europe were collapsing. It was reported that in the early morning of April 25, 1974 an army uprising supported by the popular masses had overthrown Europe's oldest fascist dictatorship in Portugal. One week later, on May 1, which was proclaimed a national holiday, a mass demonstration was held in Lisbon. Over half a million people filled all the city's central streets and squares. The people were carrying red banners, singing revolutionary songs and the national anthem and chanting: "Long live the armed forces!" and "A united people are invincible!" On their shoulders they were carrying the political prisoners whom they had liberated. Public order was ensured by the Communists and trade-union activists who were holding red carnations. Cars decorated with flowers and flags drove along the streets. A public rally was held in the city's stadium, which had been renamed "The First of May Stadium". On the stage were Alvaro Cunhal, the leader of the Communists, Mario Soares, the leader of the Socialists, and army commanders. "The night of May 1 in Lisbon," one correspondent wrote, "looked like Christmas night. The noisy and merry demonstrations lasted well into the morning."

The next year's May Day demonstration was organized by the trade union Intersindical. The celebration at The First of May Stadium was joined by the leadership of the armed forces. Air Force helicopters dropped thousands of red carnations on the stadium. Celebrations were also held in Porto, Setubal and many other cities.

May Day was for the first time openly celebrated in Greece in 1975, for the military-fascist "regime of the colonels" had fallen the year before. The Communist Party was legalized, and the workers celebrated May Day amidst red flags. Just a year later, however, the Karamanlis government mapped out a draft law on labour relations limiting the right to strike. In May 1976 the workers and employees of Athens, Piraeus, Salonika and other cities held a 48-hour strike in protest.

In 1975 dozens of thousands of demonstrators, many of them young people, marched in Rome along the central streets chanting "Our force is unity" and "No to fascism!"

Veterans of the Resistance wore the traditional red scarves of the Garibaldian guerrillas around their necks. The participants sang labour songs, "Bandiera Rossa" in particular. Luciano Lama, General Secretary of the General Italian Confederation of Labour, the country's largest trade union, spoke in San Giovanni Square. Pointing out the progress that had been achieved by the united actions of the working masses, he urged the demonstrators to mark the 30th anniversary of the liberation from fascism and the Nazi occupation by developing the ideals of the Resistance. Demonstrations attracting thousands of people were also held in Milan, Florence, Bologna and other cities. Everywhere there were red flags, and revolutionary songs were sung.

May Day demonstrations and meetings in 150 West German cities showed that the working people were determined to struggle against unemployment and were vitally interested in the issues of European security. They also greeted the victory of the Vietnamese people, and demanded that Louis Corvalán and other prisoners of the Chilean junta be released.

That year many people took part in May Day demonstrations and marches. In New York the CPUSA together with a number of trade-union and public organizations set up an organizational committee for the May Day celebration. The demonstrators marched from New York's 37th Street down to Union Square wearing red carnations in their buttonholes. The veterans of the anti-war movement marched together with young unemployed people. The marchers called for solidarity in the struggle for peace and disarmament. Public rallies were also held in Chicago, Los Angeles and other major US cities.

The progressive forces in Spain also stepped up their struggle for democratic changes. In spite of the fact that the Labour Holiday, which had been celebrated on May 1 under Franco, had not been officially revoked, the authorities banned demonstrations on May 1, 1975. The trade unions, however, nonetheless urged the working people to make the day into one of protest against unemployment and the growth of prices, for giving emigrants the right to return back to Spain, for amnesty and against repressions. The following year the Spanish working class celebrated May 1 legally for the first time in 40 years.

The holiday was also marked in Turkey for the first time since the Second World War. The celebration of May Day in

revolutionary Ethiopia included a military parade in the capital Addis Ababa. In Angola and Mozambique, which had been liberated from colonialism, as well as in Algiers, India and Afghanistan, May Day was observed as a national holiday. On the same day in Nicaragua Somosa's national guards were shooting at demonstrators in Managua, while in Santiago the Pinochet junta staged reprisals against those Chileans who dared hold a mass demonstration for the first time since the fascist coup.

In 1979 May Day was celebrated for the first time in many years in Phnom Penh, the capital of Kampuchea. Addressing the working people, the trade-union federation expressed gratitude to the socialist countries, and to the Communist and Workers' parties for their support of the liberation struggle of the Kampuchean people.

In France, Italy, West Germany and Belgium the working people struggled for their right to a secure life by saying "No to the neutron bomb!" In Portugal the May Day holiday was held under the slogan "United, people are invincible!" Big demonstrations were held in Mexico, Peru, other Latin American countries and in Japan and Thailand.

On the eve of May Day in 1980 progressive people everywhere marked the 110th anniversary of Lenin's birth. A conference of 22 Communist and Workers' parties of Europe was held in Paris on the initiative of the French Communist Party and the Polish United Workers' Party. Its participants addressed the nations of Europe with an appeal "For Peace and Disarmament". Communists expressed their readiness to engage in a dialogue, in talks, and in joint actions with Socialists, Social-Democrats, Christians and representatives of other creeds, stating that "Peace is our common treasure!"

In Great Britain a nationwide strike of 130,000 workers at the British Steel corporation supported by the major trade unions lasted for three months. Workers won a pay rise of almost 16 per cent, though the corporation refused to reverse its decision on laying off over one third of the country's steel workers. A strike struggle was also waged by auto industry workers. Working people were actively involved in the protests against the deployment of US nuclear missiles in the British Isles.

In Australia, where the trade unions had traditionally held May Day celebrations in the spirit of solidarity with the national-liberation movements of the Asian, African and Latin American nations, the celebration was attended by

guest delegations from many countries involved in a struggle against colonial oppression and for national liberation. In a number of cities demonstrations were dominated by the idea of the struggle for peace and social progress, and solidarity with the countries of the Asia-Pacific Region.

For the first time in the history of the country, May Day was freely celebrated in Nicaragua.

In the early 1980s the international situation worsened. The achievements of detente were being seriously undermined. A crisis was building up in the dialogue of states with different social and political orientations. The strength of the remaining stereotypes, primarily that of the enemy image, was having a negative impact. Other contributing factors were the inertia in the perception of the socialist states by the Western world and the dogmatic and inflexible stand of the USSR and its allies.

A negative role, for instance, was played by the policy of using force in the solution of certain regional conflicts and problems adhered to by the governments of the USSR and the United States. Take, for instance, the mistaken and tragic decision of the USSR government to bring Soviet troops into Afghanistan in 1979.

All these factors meant that in the beginning of the 1980s the world was in the most dangerous situation it had been in since the Second World War. This explains why the May Day movement in the industrialized Western states developed a growing anti-war tendency, especially since the social and economic position of the working people of those countries had noticeably stabilized since the crises of the 1970s-early 1980s.

May Day of 1982 saw a broadening of the international anti-war movement, which united people of different social positions and views. Peaceful initiatives were increasing in Great Britain, the USA, Italy, France, West Germany and Austria. Shortly before May Day a forum was held in Mexico City, which set up a Front of International Solidarity with El Salvador. Among the Front's leadership were representatives from Mexico, the USA, France, Nicaragua, West Germany, Puerto Rico, Spain, Cuba, Italy, the Netherlands and other countries.

In the People's Republic of Angola one of the main squares of Loanda was renamed "First of May Square". Decorated with posters, slogans and portraits of Marx, Engels and Lenin, it became the centre of mass demon-

strations and marches, for May Day in Angola is a major national holiday. A holiday atmosphere also reigned in other cities and villages, as tribes and peoples which had never heard of May Day before were introduced to it.

In 1983 the celebration of the day of international solidarity and brotherhood of the working people was keynoted by the 165th anniversary of Marx's birth. May Day of 1983 served to remind the working people of the importance of their international solidarity and of the need to unite all revolutionary and progressive forces. The two ideals, "peace" and "labour", which were linked by Karl Marx, reflected the goal of the struggle.

The worldwide popular movement was increasingly becoming a force which could remove the threat of nuclear war, preserve peace and thus life on Earth. Shortly before May Day Yuri Andropov, who was then the leader of the USSR, expressed his hope for peace in a letter to Samantha Smith, a 10-year-old American girl who had written to him.

The English women from Greenham Common, in a display of staunchness and courage, set up a "peace camp" of tents near the US cruise missile base. In Italy a peace march was held from Milan to Comiso, and in France an organization was formed called "The General States for Disarmament. An Open Dialogue". A national "Week of Struggle for Peace" was held in the United States.

In 1984 the celebration was referred to as the "planet's anti-war May Day". Peace marches were held in West Germany and Great Britain. Such marches in the Netherlands and Belgium reached an unprecedented scope and mass character. A human chain was formed to surround the historical centre of Köln. Each of its human links carried a poster saying: "No to nuclear death!" In Great Britain the peace movement put forward the slogan: "We do not want a Euroshima!" In Japan the residents of Okinawa said "No to Tomahawks!"

In 1985, May Day celebrations in the USSR were preceded by the April Plenary Meeting of the CPSU Central Committee. The General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Mikhail Gorbachev, stressed that the USSR would firmly follow the course of peace and peaceful coexistence and work to undo the existing entanglements of confrontation and tension.

As May Day became more widely celebrated, the variety of its forms and slogans increased. Today, there are just a few

places left on the map of the world where May Day is still outlawed.

May Day is still banned in Chile, Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras, Grenada and some other countries.

May Day is the unique day of mass actions of the working people of the whole planet. This was shown with particular clarity in 1986, the centennial of the Chicago tragedy of 1886. A special conference in commemoration of this date was addressed by Gus Hall in New York, who pointed out that a century after the Chicago tragedy the demands voiced by the working people were as varied as the countries of the world. Above the stage there was a poster done on the spot by a woman artist in crayons, showing two hands resting on the state flags of the USSR and the USA, and carefully supporting a child. Indeed, the future of humanity depends on the cooperation of these two countries.

Shortly, before the holiday, Chicago was visited by a Soviet school student, Katya Lycheva. She was received by Mayor Harold Washington. Chicago's municipal council declared the city a nuclear-free zone. In one of Chicago's parks Katya planted a Russian daisy. In a proclamation issued by the mayor the whole month of May was declared working-class history month. On May Day a mass demonstration was held in Chicago.

In the USSR May Day of 1986 fell shortly after the 27th Congress of the CPSU, at which a major programme for the revolutionary restructuring and development of the Soviet state and society was adopted. The Congress developed Lenin's philosophy of peaceful coexistence as applied to present-day conditions when the main task is to prevent war and ensure the survival of humanity. Soviet initiatives are based on the view that all peoples and public forces should participate in the struggle for peace and international security.

The year 1986 was an eventful one. Unfortunately, some of the events were tragic, such as the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The world was given another example, in addition to Hiroshima, showing how fragile life is and how destructive nuclear forces can be when out of control.

The Chernobyl accident undoubtedly gave a new impetus to the anti-nuclear and anti-war aspirations of the democratic movements in various countries, which presently merge with the aspirations of the May Day movement.

At the international peace rally held in Moscow on May 2, 1987, working people from 121 countries, representatives of international and regional trade-union associations, stated their desire to preserve and develop workers' solidarity.

At the All-Union Congress of Soviet Trade Unions its foreign guests suggested to convene a world forum of all movements of the working people on May 1, 1990.

* * *

Let us hope that in the future the working people of all countries will have the right to freely celebrate May Day. This, however, will not mean that then May Day will have lost its meaning.

The significance of May Day will remain. It consists, among other things, in the fact that even in peaceful conditions May Day commemorates the traditions of the proletarian movement, reminding the working people that the benefits they enjoy today, such as a shorter working week, the right to education, professional training and social security, and the chance to live in relatively peaceful conditions, were struggled and fought for.

And this struggle continues. May Day is an annual time to look back and remember the history of the achievements attained through struggle.

*May Day:
a Hundred-year
History*



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